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Lord Bishop of Worcester

THE

WORKS

OF

RICHARD HURD, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

VOL. II.

Printed by J. Nichols and Son,
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IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

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CRITICAL WORKS.

VOL. II.

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Q. HORATII FLACCI EPISTOLAE

AD

PISONES,

ET

AUGUSTUM:

WITH AN ENGLISH

COMMENTARY AND NOTES:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

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THE SECOND VOLUME.

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CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

I. ON THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL POETRY.

II. ON THE PROVINCES OF DRAMATIC POETRY.

III. ON POETICAL IMITATION.

IV. ON THE MARKS OF IMITATION.

VATIBVS ADDERE CALCAR,
VT STVDIO MAIORE PETANT HELICONA VIRENTEM.
HOR.

A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

IDEA OF UNIVERSAL POETRY.

DISSERTATION I.

ON THE

IDEA OF UNIVERSAL POETRY.

WHEN we speak of poetry, as an *art*, we mean *such a way or method of treating a subject, as is found most pleasing and delightful to us.* In all other kinds of literary composition, pleasure is subordinate to USE: in poetry only, PLEASURE is the end, to which use itself (however it be, for certain reasons, always pretended) must submit.

This *idea* of the end of poetry is no novel one, but indeed the very same which our great philosopher entertained of it; who gives it as the essential note of this part of learning—THAT IT SUBMITS THE SHEWS OF THINGS TO THE DESIRES OF THE MIND: WHEREAS REASON DOTH BUCKLE AND BOW THE MIND UNTO THE NATURE OF THINGS. For to *gratify the desires of the mind,* is to PLEASE: *Pleasure* then, in the

idea of Lord Bacon, is the ultimate and appropriate end of poetry; for the sake of which it accommodates itself to *the desires of the mind*, and doth not (as other kinds of writing, which are under the controul of *reason) buckle and bow the mind to the nature of things.*

But they, who like a principle the better for seeing it in Greek, may take it in the words of an old philosopher, ERATOSTHENES, who affirmed — ποιητὴν πάντα ζοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας, ἐ διδασκαλίας — of which words, the definition given above, is the translation.

This *notion* of the end of poetry, if kept steadily in view, will unfold to us all the mysteries of the poetic art. There needs but to evolve the philosopher's idea, and to apply it, as occasion serves. *The art of poetry* will be, universally, THE ART OF PLEASING; and all its *rules*, but so many MEANS, which experience finds most conducive to that end;

Sic ANIMIS natum inventumque poema JUVANDIS.

Aristotle has delivered and explained these rules, so far as they respect one species of poetry, the *dramatic*, or, more properly speaking, the *tragic:* And when such a writer,

as he, shall do as much by the other species, then, and not till then, a complete ART OF POETRY will be formed.

I have not the presumption to think myself, in any degree, equal to this arduous task: But from the idea of this art, as given above, an ordinary writer may undertake to deduce some general conclusions, concerning *Universal Poetry*, which seem preparatory to those nicer disquisitions, concerning its *several sorts or species*.

I. It follows from that IDEA, that it should neglect no advantage, that fairly offers itself, of appearing in such a dress or mode of language, as is most *taking* and agreeable to us. We may expect then, in the language or style of poetry, a choice of such words as are most sonorous and expressive, and such an arrangement of them as throws the discourse out of the ordinary and common phrase of conversation. Novelty and variety are certain sources of pleasure: a construction of words, which is not vulgar, is therefore more suited to the ends of poetry, than one which we are every day accustomed to in familiar discourse. Some manners of placing them are, also, more agreeable to the ear, than others: Poetry, then, is

studious of these, as it would by all means, not manifestly absurd, give pleasure: And hence a certain musical cadence, or what we call *Rhythm*, will be affected by the poet.

But, of all the means of adorning and enlivening a discourse by words, which are infinite, and perpetually grow upon us, as our knowledge of the tongue, in which we write, and our skill in adapting it to the ends of poetry, increases, there is none that pleases more, than *figurative expression*.

By *figurative expression*, I would be understood to mean, here, that which respects *the pictures or images of things*. And this sort of figurative expression is universally pleasing to us, because it tends to impress on the mind the most distinct and vivid conceptions; and truth of representation being of less account in this way of composition, than the liveliness of it, poetry, as such, will delight in tropes and figures, and those the most strongly and forceably expressed. And though the *application* of figures will admit of great variety, according to the nature of the subject, and the *management* of them must be suited to the taste and apprehension of the people, to whom they are addressed, yet, in some way

or other, they will find a place in all works of poetry; and they who object to the use of them, only shew that they are not capable of being pleased by this sort of composition, or do, in effect, interdict the thing itself.

The ancients looked for so much of this force and spirit of expression in whatever they dignified with the name of *poem*, that Horace tells us it was made a question by some, whether comedy were rightly referred to this class, because it differed only, in point of measure, from mere prose.

Idcirco quidam, comoedia necne poema
Esset, quaesivere: quod acer spiritus, ac vis,
Nec *verbis*, nec rebus inest: nisi quod pede certo
Differt sermoni, sermo merus — Sat. l. I. iv.

But they might have spared their doubt, or at least have resolved it, if they had considered that comedy adopts as much of this *force and spirit of words*, as is consistent with the *nature* and *degree* of that pleasure, which it pretends to give. For the name of poem will belong to every composition, whose primary end is to *please*, provided it be so constructed as to afford *all* the pleasure, which its kind or *sort* will permit.

II. From the idea of the *end* of poetry, it follows, that not only figurative and tropical terms will be employed in it, as *these*, by the images they convey, and by the air of novelty which such indirect ways of speaking carry with them, are found most delightful to us, but also that FICTION, in the largest sense of the word, is essential to poetry. For its purpose is, not to delineate truth simply, but to present it in the most taking forms; not to reflect the real face of things, but to illustrate and adorn it; not to represent the fairest objects only, but to represent them in the fairest lights, and to heighten all their beauties up to the possibility of their natures; nay, to *outstrip* nature, and to address itself to our wildest fancy, rather than to our judgment and cooler sense.

Οὔτ' ἐπιδερκτὰ τάδ' ἀνδράσιν, οὔτ' ἐπακουστὰ,
Οὔτε νόῳ περίληπτα —

As sings one of the profession[a], who seems to have understood his privileges very well.

For there is something in the mind of man, sublime and elevated, which prompts it to overlook all obvious and familiar appearances,

[a] Empedocles. See Plutarch, vol. I. p. 15. Par. 1624.

and to feign to itself other and more extraordinary; such as correspond to the extent of its own powers, and fill out all the faculties and capacities of our souls. This restless and aspiring disposition, poetry, first and principally, would indulge and flatter; and thence takes its name of *divine*, as if some power, above *human*, conspired to lift the mind to these exalted conceptions.

Hence it comes to pass, that it deals in apostrophes and invocations; that it impersonates the virtues and vices; peoples all creation with new and living forms; calls up infernal spectres to terrify, or brings down celestial natures to astonish, the imagination; assembles, combines, or connects its ideas, at pleasure; in short, prefers not only the agreeable, and the graceful, but, as occasion calls upon her, the vast, the incredible, I had almost said, the impossible, to the obvious truth and nature of things. For all this is but a feeble expression of that magic virtue of poetry, which our Shakespear has so forcibly described in those well-known lines—

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rowling,
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;

And, as Imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to aery nothing
A local habitation and a name.

When the received system of manners or religion in any country, happens to be so constituted as to suit itself in some degree to this extravagant turn of the human mind, we may expect that poetry will seize it with avidity, will dilate upon it with pleasure, and take a pride to erect its specious wonders on so proper and convenient a ground. Whence it cannot seem strange that, of all the forms in which poetry has appeared, that of *pagan fable*, and *gothic romance*, should, in their turns, be found the most alluring to the true poet. For, in defect of these advantages, he will ever adventure, in some sort, to supply their place with others of his own invention; that is, he will mould every system, and convert every subject, into the most amazing and miraculous form.

And this is that I would say, at present, of these two requisites of universal poetry, namely, *that licence of expression*, which we call the *style* of poetry, and *that licence of represen-*

tation, which we call *fiction*. The *style* is, as it were, the body of poetry; *fiction*, is its soul. Having, thus, taken the privilege of a poet to create a Muse, we have only now to give her a voice, or more properly to *tune* it, and then she will be in a condition, as one of her favourites speaks, TO RAVISH ALL THE GODS. For

III. It follows from the same idea of the *end*, which poetry would accomplish, that not only Rhythm, but NUMBERS, properly so called, is essential to it. For this Art undertaking to gratify all those desires and expectations of pleasure, that can be reasonably entertained by us, and there being a capacity in language, the instrument it works by, of pleasing us very highly, not only by the sense and imagery it conveys, but by the structure of words, and still more by the harmonious arrangement of them in metrical sounds or numbers, and lastly there being no reason in the nature of the thing itself why these pleasures should not be united, it follows that poetry will not be that which it professes to be, that is, will not accomplish its own purpose, unless it delight the ear with numbers, or, in other words, unless it be cloathed in VERSE.

The reader, I dare say, has hitherto gone along with me, in this deduction: but here, I suspect, we shall separate. Yet he will startle the less at this conclusion, if he reflect on the origin and first application of poetry among all nations.

It is every where of the most early growth, preceding every other sort of composition; and being destined for the *ear*, that is, to be either sung, or at least recited, it adapts itself, even in its first rude essays, to that sense of measure and proportion in sounds, which is so natural to us. The hearer's attention is the sooner gained by this means, his entertainment quickened, and his admiration of the performer's art excited. Men are ambitious of pleasing, and ingenious in refining upon what they observe will please. So that musical cadences and harmonious sounds, which nature dictated, are farther softened and improved by art, till poetry become as ravishing to the ear, as the images, it presents, are to the imagination. In process of time, what was at first the extemporaneous production of genius or passion, under the conduct of a *natural ear*, becomes the labour of the closet, and is conducted by artificial rules; yet still, with a secret reference to the *sense* of hearing,

and to that acceptation which melodious sounds meet with in the recital of expressive words.

Even the prose-writer (when the art is enough advanced to produce prose) having been accustomed to have his ear consulted and gratified by the poet, catches insensibly the same harmonious affection, tunes his sentences and periods to some agreement with song, and transfers into his coolest narrative, or gravest instruction, something of that music, with which his ear vibrates from poetic impressions.

In short, he leaves measured and determinate numbers, that is, METRE, to the poet, who is to please up to the height of his faculties, and the nature of his work; and only reserves to himself, whose purpose of giving pleasure is subordinate to another end, the looser musical measure, or what we call RHYTHMICAL PROSE.

The reason appears, from this deduction, why *all* poetry aspires to please by melodious numbers. To *some* species, it is thought more essential, than to others, because those species continue to be *sung*, that is, are more

immediately addressed to the ear; and because they continue to be sung in concert with *musical instruments*, by which the ear is still more indulged. It happened in antient Greece, that even tragedy retained this accompaniment of musical instruments, through all its stages, and even in its most improved state. Whence Aristotle includes *Music*, properly so called, as well as *Rhythm* and *Metre*, in his idea of the tragic poem. He did this, because he found the drama of his country, OMNIBUS NUMERIS ABSOLUTUM, I mean in possession of all the advantages which could result from the union of *rhythmical*, *metrical*, and *musical* sounds. Modern tragedy has relinquished part of these: yet still, if it be true that this poem be more pleasing by the addition of the *musical* art, and there be nothing in the nature of the composition which forbids the use of it, I know not why Aristotle's idea should not be adopted, and his precept become a standing law of the tragic stage. For this, as every other poem, being calculated and designed properly and ultimately to *please*, whatever contributes to produce that end most perfectly, all circumstances taken into the account, must be thought of the nature or essence of the kind.

But without carrying matters so far, let us confine our attention to metre, or what we call *verse*. This must be essential to every work bearing the name of *poem*, not, because we are only accustomed to call works written in verse, *poems*, but because a work, which professes to please us by every possible and proper method, and yet does not give us this pleasure, which it is in its power, and is no way improper for it, to give, must so far fall short of fulfilling its own engagements to us; that is, it has not all those qualities which we have a right to expect in a work of literary art, of which *pleasure* is the ultimate *end*.

To explain myself by an obvious instance. History undertakes to INSTRUCT us in the transactions of past times. If it answer this purpose, it does all that is of *its nature*; and, if it find means to *please* us, besides, by the harmony of its style, and vivacity of its narration, all this is to be accounted as pure gain: if it instructed ONLY, by the truth of its reports, and the perspicuity of its method, it would fully attain its *end*. Poetry, on the other hand, undertakes to PLEASE. If it employ all its powers to this purpose, it effects all that is of *its nature*: if it serve, besides, to inform or instruct us, by the truths it conveys,

and by the precepts or examples it inculcates, this service may rather be accepted, than required by us: if it pleased ONLY, by its ingenious fictions, and harmonious structure, it would discharge its office, and answer its *end.*

In this sense, the famous saying of Eratosthenes, quoted above—*that the poet's aim is to please, not to instruct*—is to be understood: nor does it appear, what reason Strabo could have to take offence at it; however it might be misapplied, as he tells us it was, by that writer. For, though the poets, no doubt (and especially THE POET, whose honour the great Geographer would assert, in his criticism on Eratosthenes) frequently *instruct us* by a true and faithful representation of things; yet even this instructive air is only assumed for the sake of *pleasing;* which, as the human mind is constituted, they could not so well do, if they did not instruct at all, that is, if *truth* were wholly neglected by them. So that *pleasure* is still the ultimate end and *scope* of the poet's art; and *instruction* itself is, in his hands, only one of the *means*, by which he would effect it[b].

[b] See STRABO, l. i. p. 15. Par. 1620.

I am the larger on this head to shew that it is not a mere verbal dispute, as it is commonly thought, whether poems should be written in verse, or no. Men may include, or not include, the idea of metre in their complex idea of what they call a *Poem*. What I contend for, is, that *metre*, as an instrument of *pleasing*, is essential to every work of poetic art, and would therefore enter into such idea, if men judged of poetry according to its confessed *nature and end*.

Whence it may seem a little strange, that my Lord Bacon should speak of *poesy as a part of learning in measure of words* FOR THE MOST PART *restrained;* when his own notion, as we have seen above, was, that the essence of poetry consisted *in submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind*. For these *shews of things* could only be exhibited to the mind through the *medium of words:* and it is just as natural for the mind to desire that these words should be *harmonious*, as that the images, conveyed in them, should be *illustrious;* there being a capacity in the mind of being delighted through its organ, the *ear*, as well as through its power, or faculty of *imagination*. And the wonder is the greater, because the great philosopher himself was aware

of the *agreement and consort which poetry hath with music*, as well as *with man's nature and pleasure*, that is, with the pleasure which naturally results from gratifying the imagination. So that, to be consistent with himself, he should, methinks, have said — *that poesy was a part of learning in measure of words* ALWAYS *restrained;* such *poesy*, as, through the idleness or negligence of writers, is not so restrained, not agreeing to his own idea of *this part of learning*[c].

These reflexions will afford a proper solution of that question, which has been agitated by the critics, "Whether a work of fiction "and imagination (such as that of the arch-"bishop of Cambray, for instance) conducted, "in other respects, according to the rules of "the epic poem, but written in prose, may "deserve the name of POEM, or not." For, though it be frivolous indeed to dispute about names, yet from what has been said it appears, that if metre be not incongruous to the nature of an epic composition, and it afford a pleasure which is not to be found in mere prose, metre is, for that reason, essential to this mode of

[c] ADV. OF LEARNING, vol. i. p. 50. Dr. Birch's Ed. 1765.

writing; which is only saying in other words, that an epic composition, to give all the pleasure which it is capable of giving, must be written in *verse*.

But, secondly, this conclusion, I think, extends farther than to such works as aspire to the name of *epic*. For instance, what are we to think of those *novels* or *romances*, as they are called, that is, fables constructed on some private and familiar subject, which have been so current, of late, through all Europe? As they propose pleasure for their end, and prosecute it, besides, in the way of *fiction*, though without metrical numbers, and generally, indeed, in harsh and rugged prose, one easily sees what their pretensions are, and under what idea they are ambitious to be received. Yet, as they are wholly destitute of measured sounds (to say nothing of their other numberless defects) they can, at most, be considered but as hasty, imperfect, and abortive poems; whether spawned from the dramatic, or narrative species, it may be hard to say —

Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
Their generation's so equivocal.

However, such as they are, these *novelties* have been generally well received: *Some*, for the real merit of their execution; *Others*, for their amusing subjects; *All* of them, for the gratification they afford, or promise at least, to a vitiated, palled, and sickly imagination — that last disease of learned minds, and sure prognostic of expiring Letters. But whatever may be the temporary success of these things (for they vanish as fast as they are produced, and are produced as soon as they are conceived) good sense will acknowledge no work of art but such as is composed according to the laws of its *kind*. These KINDS, as arbitrary things as we account them (for I neither forget nor dispute what our best philosophy teaches concerning *kinds* and *sorts)*, have yet so far their foundation in nature and the reason of things, that it will not be allowed us to multiply, or vary them, at pleasure. We may, indeed, mix and confound them, if we will (for there is a sort of literary luxury, which would engross all pleasures at once, even such as are contradictory to each other), or, in our rage for incessant gratification, we may take up with half-formed pleasures, such as come first to hand, and may be administered by any body: But true taste requires chaste, severe,

and simple pleasures; and true genius will only be concerned in administering such.

Lastly, on the same principle on which we have decided on these questions concerning the *absolute merits* of poems in prose, in *all* languages, we may, also, determine another, which has been put concerning the *comparative merits* of RHYMED, and what is called BLANK verse, in our *own*, and the other *modern* languages.

Critics and antiquaries have been sollicitous to find out who were the inventors of rhyme, which some fetch from the Monks, some from the Goths, and others from the Arabians: whereas, the truth seems to be, that *rhyme*, or the consonance of final syllables, occurring at stated intervals, is the dictate of nature, or, as we may say, an appeal to the *ear*, in all languages, and in some degree pleasing in all. The difference is, that, in some languages, these consonances are apt of themselves to occur so often that they rather nauseate, than please, and so, instead of being affected, are studiously avoided by good writers; while in others, as in all the modern ones, where these consonances are less frequent, and where the quantity of syllables

is not so distinctly marked as, of itself, to afford an harmonious measure and musical variety, there it is of necessity that poets have had recourse to *Rhyme;* or to some other expedient of the like nature, such as the *Alliteration,* for instance; which is only another way of delighting the ear by iterated sound, and may be defined, *the consonance of initial letters,* as rhyme is, the *consonance of final syllables.* All this, I say, is of necessity, because what we call verses in such languages will be otherwise untuneful, and will not strike the ear with that vivacity, which is requisite to put a sensible difference between poetic numbers and measured prose.

In short, no method of gratifying the ear by *measured sound,* which experience has found pleasing, is to be neglected by the poet: and although, from the different structure and genius of languages, these methods will be different, the studious application of such methods, as each particular language allows, becomes a necessary part of his office. He will only cultivate those methods most, which tend to produce, in a given language, the most harmonious structure or measure, of which it is capable.

Hence it comes to pass, that the poetry of some modern languages cannot so much as subsist, without rhyme: In others, it is only embellished by it. Of the *former* sort is the French, which therefore adopts, and with good reason, rhymed verse, not in tragedy only, but in comedy: And though foreigners, who have a language differently constructed, are apt to treat this observance of rhyme as an idle affectation, yet it is but just to allow that the French themselves are the most competent judges of the natural defect of their own tongue, and the likeliest to perceive by what management such defect is best remedied or concealed.

In the *latter* class of languages, whose poetry is only embellished by the use of rhyme, we may reckon the Italian and the English: which being naturally more tuneful and harmonious than the French, may afford all the melody of sound which is expected in some sorts of poetry, by its *varied pause*, and *quantity* only; while in other sorts, which are more sollicitous to please the ear, and where such sollicitude, if taken notice of by the reader or hearer, is not resented, it may be proper, or rather it becomes a law of the English and Italian poetry, to adopt *rhyme*. Thus,

our tragedies are usually composed in blank verse: but our epic and Lyric compositions are found most pleasing, when cloathed in rhyme. Milton, I know, it will be said, is an exception: But, if we set aside some learned persons, who have suffered themselves to be too easily prejudiced by their admiration of the Greek and Latin languages, and still more, perhaps, by the prevailing notion of the monkish or gothic original of rhymed verse, all other readers, if left to themselves, would, I dare say, be more delighted with this poet, if, besides his various pause, and measured quantity, he had enriched his numbers, with *rhyme*. So that his love of liberty, the ruling passion of his heart, perhaps transported him too far, when he chose to follow the example set him by one or two writers of *prime note* (to use his own eulogium), rather than comply with the regular and prevailing practice of his favoured Italy, which first and principally, as our best rhymist sings,

> With pauses, cadence, and well-vowell'd words,
> And all the graces a good ear affords,
> MADE RHYME AN ART—

Our comedy, indeed, is generally written in *prose;* but through the idleness, or ill taste,

of our writers, rather than from any other just cause. For, though rhyme be not necessary, or rather would be improper, in the comedy of our language, which can support itself in poetic numbers, without the diligence of rhyme; yet some sort of metre is requisite in this humbler species of poem; otherwise, it will not contribute all that is within its power and province, to *please*. And the particular metre, proper for this species, is not far to seek. For it can plainly be no other than a careless and looser Iambic, such as our language naturally runs into, even in conversation, and of which we are not without examples, in our old and best writers for the comic stage. But it is not wonderful that those critics, who take offence at English epic poems in *rhyme*, because the Greek and Latin only observed *quantity*, should require English comedies to be written in *prose*, though the Greek and Latin comedies were composed in *verse*. For the ill application of examples, and the neglect of them, may be well enough expected from the same men, since it does not appear that their judgment was employed, or the reason of the thing attended to, in either instance.

And THUS much for the idea of UNIVERSAL POETRY. It is the art of treating any subject

in *such* a way as is found most delightful to us; that is, IN AN ORNAMENTED AND NUMEROUS STYLE—IN THE WAY OF FICTION—AND IN VERSE. Whatever deserves the name of POEM must unite these three properties; only in different degrees of each, according to its nature. For the art of every *kind* of poetry is only this general art so modified as the *nature* of each, that is, its more immediate and subordinate end, may respectively require.

We are now, then, at the well-head of the poetic art; and they who drink deeply of this spring, will be best qualified to perform the rest. But all heads are not equal to these copious draughts; and, besides, I hear the sober reader admonishing me long since—

Lusisti satis atque BIBISTI;
Tempus abire tibi est, ne POTUM LARGIUS AEQUO
Rideat, et pulset lasciva decentius AETAS.

THURCASTON,
MDCCLXV.

A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

PROVINCES OF THE DRAMA.

DISSERTATION II.

ON THE

PROVINCES OF THE DRAMA.

IN the former Essay, I gave an idea, or slight sketch, of *Universal Poetry*. In this, I attempt to deduce the laws of one of its kinds, the *Dramatic*, under all its forms. And I engage in this task, the rather, because, though much has been said on the subject of the drama, writers seem not to have taken sufficient pains to distinguish, with exactness, its several species.

I deduce the laws of this poem, as I did those of poetry at large, from the consideration of its *end:* not the general end of poetry, which alone was proper to be considered in the former case, but the proximate end of

this kind. For from these ends, in subordination to that, which governs the genus, or which all poetry, as such, designs and prosecutes, are the peculiar rules and maxims of each species to be derived.

THE PURPOSE OF THE DRAMA is, universally, "to represent human life in the way of "*action*." But as such representation is made for separate and distinct ENDS, it is, further, distinguished into different *species*, which we know by the names of TRAGEDY, COMEDY, and FARCE.

By TRAGEDY, then, I mean that species of dramatic representation, whose *end* is "*to excite the passions of* PITY *and* TERROR, *and perhaps some others, nearly allied to them*."

By COMEDY *that*, which proposeth, for the *ends* of its representation, "*the sensation of pleasure arising from a view of the truth of* CHARACTERS, *more especially their specific differences*."

By FARCE I understand, that species of the drama, "*whose sole aim and tendency is to excite* LAUGHTER."

The idea of these *three species* being then proposed, let us now see, what conclusions may be drawn from it. And chiefly in respect of *Tragedy* and *Comedy*, which are most important. For as to what concerns the province of *Farce*, this will be easily understood, when the character of the other two is once settled.

CHAP. I.

ON THE PROVINCES OF TRAGEDY AND COMEDY.

From the idea of these two species, as given above, the following conclusions, about the *natures* of each, are immediately deducible.

1. If the proper end of TRAGEDY be to *affect*, it follows, "that *actions*, not characters, "are the chief object of its representations." For that which *affects* us most in the view of human life is the observation of those signal circumstances of *felicity or distress*, which occur in the fortunes of men. But *felicity* and *distress*, as the great critic takes notice, depend on *action*; κατὰ τὰς πράξεις, εὐδαίμονες, ἢ τἐναντίον. They are then the calamitous *events*, or fortunate *Issues* in human action, which stir up the stronger *affections*, and agitate the heart with *Passion*. The *manners* are not, indeed, to be neglected. But they become an inferior consideration in the views of the tragic poet, and are exhibited only for the sake of making the *action* more proper to interest us. Thus our *joy*, on the *happy*

catastrophe of the fable, depends, in a good degree, on the *virtuous character* of the agent; as on the other hand, we sympathize more strongly with him, on a *distressful issue.* The *manners* of the several persons in the drama must, also, be signified, that the *action,* which in many cases will be determined by them, may appear to be carried on with *truth and probability.* Hence every thing passing before us, as we are accustomed to see it in real life, we enter more warmly into their interests, as forgetting, that we are attentive to a *fictitious scene.* And, besides, from knowing the personal *good, or ill, qualities* of the agents, we learn to anticipate their future *felicity* or *misery,* which gives increase to the *passion* in either case. Our acquaintance with IAGO's *close villainy* makes us tremble for Othello and Desdemona beforehand: and HAMLET's *filial piety and intrepid daring* occasion the audience secretly to exult in the *expectation* of some successful vengeance to be inflicted on the incestuous murderers.

2. For the same reason as tragedy takes for its *object* the actions of men, it, also, prefers, or, rather confines itself to, such actions, as are most *important.* Which is only saying, that as it intends to *interest,* it, of course,

chuses the representation of those *events*, which are most *interesting*.

And this shews the defect of modern tragedy, in turning so constantly as it does, on *love subjects*; the effect of this practice is, that, excepting only the rank of the actors (which indeed, as will be seen presently, is of considerable importance), the rest is below the dignity of this drama. For the *action*, when stripped of its accidental ornaments and reduced to the *essential fact*, is nothing more than what might as well have passed in a cottage, as a king's palace. The Greek poets should be our guides here, who take the very grandest events in their story to ennoble their tragedy. Whence it comes to pass that the *action*, having an essential dignity, is always *interesting*, and by the simplest management of the poet becomes in a supreme degree, *pathetic*.

3. On the same account, the *persons*, whose actions Tragedy would exhibit to us, must be of *principal rank and dignity*. For the actions of these are, both in *themselves* and in their *consequences*, most fitted to excite passion. The *distresses* of private and inferior persons will, no doubt, *affect* us greatly; and

we may give the name of *tragedies*, if we please, to dramatic representations of them: as, in fact, we have several applauded pieces of this kind. Nay, it may seem, that the fortunes of private men, as more nearly resembling *those* of the generality, should be most *affecting*. But this circumstance, in no degree, makes amends for the loss of other and much greater *advantages*. For, whatever be the *unhappy incidents* in the story of private men, it is certain, they must take faster hold of the *imagination*, and, of course, impress the heart more forcibly, when related of the higher characters in life.

Τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ἀξιοπενθεῖς
Φῆμαι μᾶλλον κατέχουσιν.

EURIP. HIPP. v. 1484.

Kings, Heroes, Statesmen, and other persons of great and public authority, influence by their *ill-fortune* the whole community, to which they belong. The attention is rouzed, and all our faculties take an alarm, at the apprehension of such extensive and important wretchedness. And, besides, if we regard the *event* itself, without an eye to its *effects*, there is still the widest difference between the two cases. Those ideas of awe and veneration,

which opinion throws round the persons of princes, make us esteem the very *same event* in their fortunes, as more august and emphatical, than in the fortunes of private men. In the *one*, it is ordinary and familiar to our conceptions; it is singular and surprizing, in the *other*. The fall of a *cottage*, by the accidents of time and weather, is almost unheeded; while the ruin of a *tower*, which the neighbourhood hath gazed at for ages with admiration, strikes all observers with concern. So that if we chuse to continue the absurdity, taken notice of in the last article of planning *unimportant action* in our tragedy, we should, at least, take care to give it this foreign and extrinsic *importance* of great *actors*: Yet our passion for the *familiar* goes so far, that we have tragedies, not only of private action, but of *private persons*; and so have well nigh annihilated the noblest of the two dramas amongst us. On the whole it appears, that as the proper object of tragedy is *action*, so it is *important* action, and therefore more especially the action of *great and illustrious men*. Each of these conclusions is the direct consequence of our idea of its *end*.

The reverse of all this holds true of COMEDY. For,

1. Comedy, by the very terms of the definition, is conversant about *characters*. And if we observe, that which creates the pleasure we find in contemplating the lives of men, considered as distinct from the *interest* we take in their fortunes, is the contemplation of their manners and humours. Their *actions*, when they are not of that sort, which seizes our admiration, or catches the affections, are no otherwise considered by us, than as they are sensible indications of the internal sentiment and disposition. Our intimate consciousness of the several turns and windings of our nature, makes us attend to these pictures of human life with an incredible curiosity. And herein the proper entertainment, which comic representation, *as such*, administers to the mind, consists. By turning the thought on *event and action*, this entertainment is proportionably lessened; that is, the *end* of comedy is less perfectly attained[d].

[d] Aristotle was of the same mind, as appears from his definition of comedy, which, says he, is ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΥΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ; [κ. ε.] that is, *the imitation of characters*, whatever be the distinct meaning of the term φαυλότεροι. It is true, this critic, in his account of the origin of tragedy and comedy, makes them both the imitations of ACTIONS. Οἱ μὲν σεμνότεροι ΤΑΣ ΚΑΛΑΣ ἐμιμοῦντο ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι ΤΑΣ τῶν φαύλων. [κ. δ.] Yet, even here, the

But here, again, though *action* be not the main object of comedy, yet it is not to be neglected, any more than *character* in tragedy, but comes in as an useful accessary, or assistant to it. For the *manners of men* only shew themselves, or shew themselves most usually, in *action*. It is this, which fetches out the latent strokes of *character*, and renders the inward *temper and disposition* the object of sense. *Probable circumstances* are then imagined, and a certain *train of action* contrived, to evidence the *internal qualities*. There is no *other*, or no *probable* way, but this, of bringing us acquainted with them. Again; by engaging his *characters* in a course of action and the pursuit of some *end*, the comic poet leaves them to express themselves undisguisedly, and *without design*; in which the essence of *humour* consists.

Add to this, that when the *fable* is so contrived as to attach the mind, we very naturally fancy ourselves present at a course of *living* action. And this illusion quickens our atten-

expression is so put, as if he had been conscious that *persons*, not *actions*, were the direct object of comedy. And the quotation, now alledged from another place, where a definition is given more in form, shews, that this was, in effect, his sentiment.

tion to the *characters*, which no longer appear to us creatures of the poet's fiction, but actors in real life.

These observations concerning the *moderated* use of action in comedy, instruct us what to think "of those intricate Spanish plots, "which have been in use, and have taken both "with us and some French writers for the "stage. The truth is, they have hindered "very much the main end of comedy. For "when these unnatural plots are used, the "mind is not only entirely *drawn off* from "the characters by those surprizing turns and "revolutions; but characters have no oppor-"tunity even of being *called out* and displaying "themselves. For the actors of all characters "*succeed* and are *embarrassed* alike, when the "instruments for carrying on designs are only "*perplexed apartments, dark entries, dis-*"*guised habits*, and *ladders of ropes*. The "comic plot is, and must, indeed, be carried "on by *deceipt*. The Spanish scene does it "by deceiving the man *through his senses:* Te-"rence and Moliere, by deceiving him *through* "*his passions and affections*. This is the "right method: for the character is *not* called "out under the *first* species of deceipt: under "the *second*, the character does *all*."

2. As *character*, not *action*, is the object of comedy; so the *characters* it paints must not be of *singular and illustrious note*, either for their *virtues* or *vices*. The reason is, that such characters take too fast hold of the *affections*, and so call off the mind from adverting to the *truth* of the manners; that is, from receiving the *pleasure*, which this poem *intends*. Our *sense of imitation* is that to which the comic poet addresses himself; but such pictures of *eminent worth* or *villainy* seize upon the *moral sense;* and by raising the strong correspondent passions of *admiration* and *abhorrence*, turn us aside from contemplating the *imitation itself*. And,

3. For a like cause, comedy confines its views to the characters of *private and inferior persons*. For the *truth of character*, which is the spring of *humour*, being necessarily, as was observed, to be shewn through the medium of *action*, and the actions of the great being usually such as excite the *pathos*, it follows of course, that these cannot, with propriety, be made the actors in comedy. Persons of high and public life, if they are drawn agreeably to our accustomed ideas of them, must be employed in such a *course of action*, as arrests the attention, or interests the passions; and

either way it diverts the mind from observing the *truth* of manners, that is, it prevents the attainment of the specific *end*, which comedy designs.

And if the reason, here given, be sufficient to exclude the *higher characters* in life from this *drama*, even where the representation is intended to be *serious*, we shall find it still more improper to expose them in any pleasant or ridiculous light. 'Tis true, the follies and foibles of the great will apparently take an easier ridicule by representation, than those of their inferiors. And this it was, which misled the celebrated P. CORNEILLE into the opinion, *that the actions of the great, and even of kings themselves, provided they be of the ridiculous kind, are as fit objects of comedy, as any other.* But he did not reflect, that the *actions* of the great being usually such, as interest the intire community, at least scarcely any other falling beneath vulgar notice; and the higher *characters* being rarely seen or contemplated by the people but with reverence, hence it is, that in fact, *the representation of high life* cannot, without offence to probability, be made *ridiculous*, or consequently be admitted into comedy under this view. And therefore PLAUTUS, when he thought fit to

introduce these reverend personages on the comic stage in his AMPHITRUO, though he employed them in no very serious matters, was yet obliged to apologize for this impropriety in calling his play a *Tragicomedy*. What he says upon the occasion, though delivered with an air of pleasantry, is according to the laws of just criticism.

Faciam ut commista sit TRAGICOCOMOEDIA.
Nam me perpetuo facere, ut sit Comoedia
REGES QUO VENIANT ET DII, *non par arbitror.*
Quid igitur? Quoniam hic SERVOS QUOQUE PARTES HABET,
Faciam sit, proinde ut dixi, TRAGICOCOMOEDIA.
PROL. IN AMPHIT.

And now, taking the *idea* of the *two dramas*, as here opened, along with us, we shall be able to give an account of several attributes, *common* to both, or which further *characterize* each of them. And,

1. *A plot will be required in both.* For the end of tragedy being to excite the affections *by* action, and the end of comedy, to manifest the truth of character *through* it, an artful *constitution of the Fable* is required to do justice both to the one and the other. It serves to bring out the *pathos*, and to produce *humour*,

And thus the general form or structure of the two dramas will be one and the same.

2. More particularly, *an unity and even simplicity in the conduct of the fable*[e] *is a perfection in each.* For the course of the *affections* is diverted and weakened by the intervention of what we call a *double plot*; and even by a multiplicity of *subordinate events*, though tending to a common *end*; and, of *persons*, though all of them, some way, concerned in promoting it. The like consideration shews the observance of this *rule* to be essen-

[e] The neglect of this is one of the greatest defects in the *modern drama*; which in nothing falls so much short of the perfection of the Greek scene as in this want of simplicity in the construction of its fable. The good sense of the author of the *History of the Italian Theatre* (who, though a mere player, appears to have had juster notions of the drama, than the generality of even professed critics) was sensibly struck with this difference in *tragedy*. "Quant à l'unité d'action, says he, je trouve un grande "difference entre les tragedies Grecques et les tragedies "Françoises; j'apperçois toûjours aisément l'action des "tragedies Grecques, et je ne la perds point de vûe; mais "dans les tragedies Françoises, j'avoüe, que j'ai souvent "bien de la peine à demêler l'action des episodes, dont "elle est chargée." [*Hist. du Theatre Italien*, par Louis Riccoboni, p. 293. *Paris* 1728.]

tial to just comedy. For when the *attention* is split on so many interfering objects, we are not at leisure to observe, nor do we so fully enter into, the *truth of representation* in any of them; the *sense* of *humour*, as of the *pathos*, depending very much on the continued and undiverted operation of its *object* upon us.

3. The two dramas agree, also, in this circumstance; that the *manners* of the persons exhibited should be *imperfect*. An absolutely *good*, or an absolutely *bad*, character is foreign to the purpose of each. And the reason is, 1, That such a representation is *improbable*. And *probability* constitutes, as we have seen, the very essence of comedy; and is the *medium*, through which tragedy is enabled most powerfully to affect us. 2. Such *characters* are improper to *comedy*, because, as was hinted above, they turn the attention aside from contemplating the *expression* of them, which we call *humour*. And they are not less unsuited to *tragedy*, because though they make a forcible impression on the mind, yet, as Aristotle well observes, they do not produce the passions of *pity and terror;* that is, their *impressions* are not of the nature of that *pathos*, by which tragedy works its purpose. [*x.* ιγ.]

There are, likewise, some peculiarities, which distinguish the two dramas. And

1. *Though a plot be necessary to produce* humour, *as well as the pathos, yet a* good plot *is not so essential to comedy, as tragedy.* For the pathos is the result of the *entire action;* that is, of all the circumstances of the story taken together, and conspiring by a probable tendency, to a completion in the *event.* A failure in the just arrangement and disposition of the parts may, then, affect what is of the essence of this drama. On the contrary, *humour,* though brought out by *action,* is not the effect of the *whole,* but may be distinctly evidenced in a *single scene;* as may be eminently illustrated in the two comedies of Fletcher, called *The Little French Lawyer,* and *The Spanish Curate.* The nice contexture of the fable therefore, though it may give a *pleasure* of another kind, is not so immediately required to the production of *that* pleasure, which the nature of comedy demands. Much less is there occasion for that labour and ingenuity of contrivance, which is seen in the intricacy of the Spanish fable. Yet this is the taste of our comedy. Our writers are all for plot and intrigue; and never appear so well satisfied with themselves as when, to

speak in their own phrase, they contrive to have a great deal of *business* on their hands. Indeed they have reason. For it hides their inability to colour *manners*, which is the proper but much harder province of true comedy.

2. *Tragedy succeeds best, when the subject is* real; *comedy, when it is* feigned. What would this say, but that tragedy, turning our attention principally on the *action represented*, finds means to *interest* us more strongly on the persuasion of its being taken from *actual life?* While comedy, on the other hand, can neglect these scrupulous measures of *probability*, as intent only on exhibiting *characters*; for which purpose an *invented story* will serve much better. The reason is, *real action* does not ordinarily afford variety of incidents enough to shew the *character* fully: *feigned action* may.

And this difference, we may observe, explains the reason why tragedies are often formed on the most *trite and vulgar subjects*, whereas a *new* subject is generally demanded in comedy. The *reality* of the story being of so much consequence to interest the affections, the more *known* it is, the fitter for the poet's purpose. But a *feigned* story having been

found more convenient for the display of characters, it grew into a rule that the story should be always *new*. This disadvantage on the side of the comic poet is taken notice of in those verses of Antiphanes, or rather, as Casaubon conjectures, of *Aristophanes*, in a play of his intitled, Ποίησις. The reason of this difference now appears.

—Μακάριόν ἐςιν ἡ τραγῳδία
Ποίημα κατὰ παντ'. εἴγε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι
Ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσὶν ἐγνωρισμένοι,
Πρὶν καί τιν' εἰπεῖν, ὡς ὑπομνῆσαι μόνον
Δεῖ τὸν ποιητήν. Ὀιδίπȣν γάρ ἄν γε φῶ,
Τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντ' ἴσασιν· Ὁ πατὴρ Λάϊος,
Μήτηρ Ἰοκάςη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες τίνες·
Τὶ πείσεθ' ȣ̃τος, τί πεποίηκεν · · · ·
Ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' ȣ̓κ ἔςιν· ἀλλὰ πάντα δεῖ
Εὑρεῖν ὀνόματα καινὰ, τὰ διῳκημένα
Πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν καταςροφὴν,
Τὴν ἐσβολήν. ἂν ἕν τι τȣ́των παραλίπῃ,
Χρέμης τις, ἢ Φείδων τις ἐκσυρίττεται,
Πηλεῖ δὲ ταῦτ' ἔξεςι καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν.

One sees, then, the reason why Tragedy prefers real *subjects*, and even old ones; and, on the contrary, why comedy delights in feigned subjects, and new.

The same genius in the two dramas is observable, in their draught of *characters*. Comedy makes all its Characters *general;* Tragedy, *particular*. The *Avare* of Moliere is not so properly the picture of a *covetous man*, as of *covetousness* itself. Racine's *Nero*, on the other hand, is not a picture of *cruelty*, but of a *cruel man*.

Yet here it will be proper to guard against two mistakes, which the principles now delivered may be thought to countenance.

The *first* is with regard to *tragic* characters, which I say are *particular*. My meaning is, they are *more* particular than those of comedy. That is, the *end* of tragedy does not require or permit the poet to draw together so many of those characteristic circumstances which shew the manners, as Comedy. For, in the former of these dramas, no more of *character* is shewn, than what the course of the action necessarily calls forth. Whereas, all or most of the features, by which it is usually distinguished, are sought out and industriously displayed in the *latter*.

The case is much the same as in *portrait painting;* where, if a great master be required

to draw a *particular face*, he gives the very lineaments he finds in it; yet so far resembling to what he observes of the same turn in other faces, as not to affect any minute circumstance of peculiarity. But if the same artist were to design a *head* in general, he would assemble together all the customary traits and features, any where observable through the species, which should best express the idea, whatever it was, he had conceived in his own mind and wanted to exhibit in the picture.

There is much the same difference between the two sorts of *dramatic* portraits. Whence it appears that in calling the tragic character *particular*, I suppose it only *less representative* of the kind than the comic; not that the draught of so much character as it is concerned to represent should not be *general:* the contrary of which I have asserted and explained at large elsewhere [*Notes on the A. P.* v. 317.]

Next, I have said, the characters of just comedy are *general*. And this I explain by the instance of the *Avare* of Moliere, which conforms more to the idea of *avarice*, than to that of the real *avaricious man*. But here again, the reader will not understand me, as saying this in the strict sense of the words. I

even think Moliere faulty in the instance given; though, with some necessary explanation, it may well enough serve to express my meaning.

The view of the comic scene being to delineate characters, this end, I suppose, will be attained most perfectly, by making those characters as *universal* as possible. For thus the person shewn in the drama being the representative of all characters of the same kind, furnishes in the highest degree the entertainment of *humour*. But then this universality must be such as agrees not to our idea of the *possible* effects of the character as conceived in the abstract, but to the *actual* exertion of its powers; which experience justifies, and common life allows. Moliere, and before him Plautus, had offended in this; that for a picture of the *avaricious man*, they presented us with a fantastic unpleasing draught of the *passion of avarice*. I call this a *fantastic* draught, because it hath no archetype in nature. And it is, farther, an *unpleasing* one, for, being the delineation of a *simple passion unmixed*, it wanted all those

—Lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

These *lights and shades* (as the poet finely calls the intermixture of many passions, which, with the *leading* or principal one, form the human character) must be blended together in every picture of dramatic manners; because the avowed business of the drama is to image real life. Yet the draught of the *leading* passion must be as general as this *strife* in nature permits, in order to express the intended character more perfectly.

All which again is easily illustrated in the instance of painting. In *portraits of character*, as we may call those that give a picture of the *manners*, the artist, if he be of real ability, will not go to work on the possibility of an abstract idea. All he intends, is to shew that some one quality *predominates*: and this he images strongly, and by such signatures as are most conspicuous in the operation of the *leading passion*. And when he hath done this, we may, in common speech or in compliment, if we please, to his art, say of such a portrait that it images to us not the *man* but the *passion*; just as the ancients observed of the famous statue of Apollodorus by Silanion, that it expressed not the angry *Apollodorus*, but his passion of *anger*[f]. But by this must

[f] *Non hominem ex ære fecit, sed iracundiam.* Plin. xxxiv. 8

be understood only that he has well expressed the leading parts of the designed character. For the rest he treats his *subject* as he would any other; that is, he represents the *concomitant affections*, or considers merely that general symmetry and proportion which are expected in a human figure. And this is to copy nature, which affords no specimen of a man turned all into a single passion. No metamorphosis could be more strange or incredible. Yet portraits of this vicious taste are the admiration of common starers, who, if they find a picture of a *miser* for instance (as there is no commoner subject of moral portraits) in a collection, where every muscle is strained, and feature hardened into the expression of this idea, never fail to profess their wonder and approbation of it.—On this idea of excellence Le Brun's book of the PASSIONS must be said to contain a set of the justest *moral portraits*: And the CHARACTERS of Theophrastus might be recommended, in a *dramatic* view, as preferable to those of Terence.

The virtuosi in the fine arts would certainly laugh at the former of these judgments. But the latter, I suspect, will not be thought so extraordinary. At least if one may guess from the practice of some of our best comic writers,

and the success which such plays have commonly met with. It were easy to instance in almost all plays of character. But if the reader would see the extravagance of building dramatic manners on abstract ideas, in its full light, he needs only turn to B. Jonson's *Every man out of his humour*; which under the name of a *play of character* is in fact, an unnatural, and, as the painters call it, *hard* delineation of a group of *simply existing passions*, wholly chimerical, and unlike to any thing we observe in the commerce of real life. Yet this comedy has always had its admirers. And *Randolph*, in particular, was so taken with the design, that he seems to have formed his *muse's looking-glass* in express imitation of it.

Shakespeare, we may observe, is in this as in all the other more essential beauties of the drama, a perfect model. If the discerning reader peruse attentively his comedies with this view, he will find his *best-marked* characters discoursing through a great deal of their *parts*, just like any other, and only expressing their essential and leading qualities occasionally, and as circumstances concur to give an easy exposition to them. This singular excellence of his comedy, was the effect of his copying

faithfully after nature, and of the force and vivacity of his genius, which made him attentive to what the progress of the scene successively presented to him: whilst *imitation* and *inferior talents* occasion little writers to wind themselves up into the habit of attending perpetually to their main view, and a solicitude to keep their favourite characters in constant play and agitation. Though in this illiberal exercise of their wit, they may be said to use the *persons of the drama* as a certain facetious sort do their *acquaintance*, whom they urge and teize with their civilities, not to give them a reasonable share in the conversation, but to force them to play *tricks* for the diversion of the company.

I have been the longer on this argument, to prevent the reader's carrying what I say of the superiority of *plays of character* to *plays of intrigue* into an extreme; a mistake, into which some good writers have been unsuspectingly betrayed by the acknowledged truth of the general principle. It is so natural for men on all occasions, to fly out into extremes, that too much care cannot be had to retain them in a due medium. But to return from this digression to the consideration of the difference of the two dramas.

3. A sameness of *character is not usually objected to in tragedy: in comedy, it would not be endured.* The passion of *avarice*, to resume the instance given above, being the main object, we find nothing but a disgustful repetition in a second attempt to delineate that *character. A particular cruel man* only engrossing our regard in *Nero*, when the train of events evidencing such cruelty is changed, we have all the novelty we look for, and can contemplate, with pleasure, the very *same* character, set forth by a different course of action, or displayed in some other *person.*

4. Comedy succeeds best when the scene is laid *at home*, tragedy for the most part when *abroad.* "This appears at first sight whim-
"sical and capricious, but has its foundation
"in nature. What we chiefly seek in comedy
"is a true image of life and *manners*, but we
"are not easily brought to think we have it
"given us, when dressed in foreign modes and
"fashions. And yet a good writer must follow
"his scene, and observe decorum. On the
"contrary, 'tis the action in tragedy which
"most engages our attention. But to fit a
"domestic occurrence for the stage, we must
"take greater liberties with the action than a

"well-known story will allow." [*Pope's Works*, vol. iv. p. 185.]

Other *characters* of the two dramas, as well *peculiar*, as *common*, which might be accounted for from the just notion of them, delivered above, I leave to the observation of the reader. For my intention is not to write a complete treatise on the drama, but briefly to lay down such principles, from whence its *laws* may be derived.

CHAP. II.

OF THE GENIUS OF COMEDY.

But it may not be amiss to express myself a little more fully as to the *genius* of comedy; which for want of passing through the hands of such a critic as Aristotle, has been less perfectly understood.

Its *end* is the production of *humour*: or which comes to the same thing, "of that "*pleasure*, which the *truth* of representation "affords, in the *exhibition* of the *private cha-* "*racters* of life, more particularly their *spe-* "*cific differences*." I add this *latter* clause, because the principal pleasure we take in contemplating characters consists in noting those *differences*. The general attributes of humanity, if represented ever so truly, give us but a slender entertainment. They, of course, make a part of the drama; but we chiefly delight in a picture of those peculiar *traits*, which distinguish the species. Now these discriminating marks in the characters of men are not *necessarily* the causes of ridicule, or pleasantry of any kind; but *accidentally*, and

according to the nature or quality of them. The vanity, and impertinent boasting of *Thraso* is the natural object of *contempt*, and, when truly and forcibly expressed in his own character, provokes *ridicule*. The easy humanity of *Mitio*, which is the leading part of his character, is the object of *approbation*; and, when shewn in his own conduct, excites a *pleasure*, in common with all just *expression of the manners*, but of a *serious* nature, as being joined with the sentiment of *esteem*.

But now as most men find a greater pleasure in gratifying the passion of *contempt*, than the calm instinct of *approbation*, and since perhaps the constitution of human life is such, as affords more exercise for the one, than the other, hence it hath come to pass, that the comic poet, who paints for the generality, and follows nature, chuses more commonly to select and describe those *peculiarities* in the human character, which, by their nature, excite *pleasantry*, than such as create a serious regard and esteem. Hence some persons have appropriated the name of *comedies* to those dramas, which chiefly aim at producing *humour*, in the more *proper* sense of the word; under which view it means "such an ex-"pression or picture of what is odd, or inor-

"dinate in each character, as gives us the "fullest and strongest image of the original, "and by the truth of the representation ex- "poses the *ridicule* of it." And it is certain, that comedy receives great advantage from representations of this kind. Nay, it cannot well subsist without them. Yet it doth not exclude the other and more *serious* entertainment, which, as it stands on the same foundation of *truth of representation*, I venture to include under the *common term*.

Further, there are *two ways* of evidencing the characteristic and predominant qualities of men, or, of producing *humour*, which require to be observed. The *one* is, when they are shewn in the perpetual course and tenor of the representation; that is, when the *humour* results from the *general* conduct of the person in the drama, and the discourse, which he holds in it. The *other* is, when by an happy and lively stroke, the characteristic quality is laid open and exposed *at once*.

The *first* sort of *humour* is that which we find in the ancients, and especially Terence. The *latter* is almost peculiar to the moderns; who, in uniting these two species of *humour*,

have brought a vast improvement to the comic scene. The reason of this difference may perhaps have been the singular simplicity of the old writers, who were contented to take up with such sentiments or circumstances, as most naturally and readily occurred in the course of the drama: whereas the moderns have been ambitious to shew a more exquisite and studied investigation into the workings of human nature, and have sought out for those peculiarly striking lineaments, in which the essence of character consists. On the same account, I suppose, it was that the ancients had *fewer* characters in their plays, than the moderns, and those more *general;* that is, their dramatic writers were well satisfied with picturing the most *usual* personages, and in their most *obvious* lights. They did not, as the moderns (who, if they would aspire to the praise of *novelty*, were obliged to this route), cast about for less *familiar* characters; and the nicer and *less observed* peculiarities which distinguish *each*. Be it as it will, the observation is certain. Later dramatists have apparently shewn a more accurate knowledge of human life: and, by opening these new and untryed veins of *humour*, have exceedingly enriched the comedy of our times.

But, though we are not to look for the *two species of humour*, before-mentioned, in the same perfection on the simpler stages of *Greece and Rome*, as in *our* improved Theatres, yet the *first* of them was clearly seen and successfully practised by the ancient comic masters; and there are not wanting in them some few examples even of the *last*. "The old man in "the *Mother-in-Law* says to his Son,

Tum tu igitur nihil adtulisti huc plus unâ sententiâ.

"This, as an excellent person observed to me, "is true *humour*. For his character, which "was that of a lover of money, drew the ob- "servation naturally and forcibly from him. "His disappointment of a rich succession made "him speak contemptibly of a moral lesson, "which rich and covetous men, in their best "humours, have no high reverence for. And "this too without *design*; which is important, "and shews the distinction of what, in the "more restrained sense of the word, we call "*humour*, from other modes of *pleasantry*. "For had a young friend of the son, an un- "concerned spectator of the scene, made the "observation, it had then, in another's mouth, "been *wit*, or a designed *banter* on the father's "disappointment. As, on the other hand,

" when such characteristic qualities are exag-
" gerated, and the expression of them stretched
" beyond *truth*, they become *buffoonry*, even
" in the person's *own*."

This is an instance of the *second species* of humour, under its idea of exciting *ridicule*. But it may, also, be employed with the utmost *seriousness*; as being only a method of expressing the *truth* of character in the *most striking* manner. This same *old man* in the Hecyra will furnish an example. Though a lover of money, he appears, in the main, of an honest and worthy nature, and to have born the truest affection to an amiable and favourite son. In the perplexity of the scene, which had arisen from the supposed misunderstanding between his *son's* wife and his *own*, he proposes, as an expedient to end all differences, to retire with his wife into the country. And to enforce this proposal to the young man, who had his reasons for being against it, he adds,

odiosa est haec aetas adolescentulis :
E medio aequum excedere est : postremò nos
jam fabula
Sumus, Pamphile, senex atque anus.

There is nothing, I suppose in these words, which provokes a smile. Yet the *humour* is

strong, as before. In his solicitude to promote his son's satisfaction, he lets fall a sentiment truly characteristic, and which old men usually take great pains to conceal; I mean, his acknowledgment of *that suspicious fear of contempt, which is natural to old age.* So true a picture of life, in the representation of this *weakness,* might, in other circumstances, have created some *pleasantry;* but the *occasion,* which forced it from him, discovering, at the same time, the *amiable disposition* of the speaker, covers the ridicule of it, or more properly converts it into an object of our *esteem.*

We have here, then, a kind of *intermediate* species of *humour* betwixt the *ridiculous* and the *grave;* and may perceive how insensibly the *one* becomes the *other,* by the accidental mixture of a virtuous *quality,* attracting *esteem.* Which may serve to reconcile the reader to the application of this *term* even to such *expression* of the manners, as is perfectly *serious;* that is, where the *quality represented* is entirely, and without the least *touch* of attending ridicule, the object of *moral approbation* to the mind. As in that famous asseveration of Chremes in the *Self-tormentor*:

Homo sum: humani nihil à me alienum puto.

This is a strong expression of character; and, coming unaffectedly from him in answer to the cutting reproof of his friend,

Chreme, tantumne ab re tuâ'st otî tibi
Aliena ut cures; ea quae nihil ad te adtinent?

hath the essence of true *humour*, that is, is a *lively picture of the manners without design.*

Yet in this instance, which hath not been observed, the *humour*, though of a serious cast, is heightened by a mixture of *satire*. For we are not to take this, as hath constantly been done, for a sentiment of pure humanity and the natural ebullition of benevolence. We may observe in it a designed stroke of satirical resentment. *The Self-tormentor*, as we saw, had ridiculed Chremes' *curiosity* by a severe reproof. Chremes, to be even with him, reflects upon the *inhumanity* of his temper. "You, says he, seem such a foe to humanity, "that you spare it not *in yourself*; I, on the "other hand, am affected, when I see it suffer "in *another*."

Whence we learn, that, though all which is requisite to constitute comic humour, be *a just expression of character without design*,

yet such *expression* is felt more *sensibly*, when it is further enlivened by *ridicule*, or quickened by the poignancy of *satire*.

From the account of comedy, here given, it may appear, that the idea of this drama is much enlarged beyond what it was in Aristotle's time; who defines it to be, *an imitation of light and trivial actions, provoking ridicule.* His notion was taken from the state and practice of the Athenian stage; that is, from the *old* or *middle* comedy, which answers to this description. The great revolution, which the introduction of the *new comedy* made in the drama, did not happen till afterwards. This proposed for its *object*, in general, *the actions and characters of ordinary life*; which are not, of necessity, ridiculous, but, as appears to every observer, of a mixt kind, *serious* as well as *ludicrous*, and within their proper sphere of influence, not unfrequently, even *important*. This kind of *imitation* therefore, now admits the *serious*; and its scenes, even without the least mixture of *pleasantry*, are entirely *comic*. Though the common run of *laughers* in our theatre are so little aware of the extension of this *province*, that I should scarcely have hazarded the observation, but for the authority of *Terence*; who hath confessedly

very little of the *pleasant* in his drama. Nay, one of the most admired of his comedies hath the gravity, and, in some places, almost the solemnity of *tragedy itself*. But this *idea* of comedy is not peculiar to the more polite and liberal *ancients*. Some of the best *modern* comedies are fashioned in agreement to it. And an instance or two, which I am going to produce from the stage of simple nature, may seem to shew it the plain suggestion of common sense.

"The Amautas (says the author of the "*Royal Commentaries of* PERU), who were "men of the best ingenuity amongst them, in-"vented COMEDIES and TRAGEDIES; which, "on their solemn festivals, they represented "before the King and the Lords of his court. "The plot or argument of their *tragedies* was "to represent *their military exploits, and the* "*triumphs, victories, and heroic actions of* "*their renowned men*. And the subject or "design of their *comedies* was, to demonstrate "*the manner of good husbandry in cultivating* "*and manuring their fields, and to shew the* "*management of domestic affairs, with other* "*familiar matters*. These plays, continues "he, were not made up of obscene and dis-"honest farces, but such as were of *serious*

" *entertainment, composed of grave and acute* " *sentences,* &c."

Two things are observable in this brief account of the Peruvian drama. *First,* that its *species* had respect to the very different *objects* of the *higher* or *lower* stations. For the *great and powerful* were occupied in *war:* and *agriculture* was the chief employment of *private and ordinary life.* And, in this distinction, these *Indian,* perfectly agreed with the old Roman poets; whose PRAETEXTATA and TOGATA shew, that they had precisely the same ideas of the drama. *Secondly,* we do not learn only, what difference there *was* betwixt their tragedy and comedy, but we are also told, what difference there was *not.* It was not, that one was *serious,* and the other *pleasant.* For we find it expressly asserted of *both,* that they *were of grave and serious entertainment.*

And this last will explain a similar observation on the Chinese, *who,* as P. DE PREMERE acquaints us, *make no distinction betwixt tragedies and comedies.* That is, *no distinction,* but what the different *subjects* of each make necessary. They do not, as our European dramas, differ in this, that the *one* is intended

to make us *weep*, and the other to make us *laugh*.

These are full and precise testimonies. For I lay no stress on what the Historian of *Peru* tells us, *that there were no obscenities in their comedy*, nor on what an encomiast of *China* pretends, *that there is not so much as an obscene word in all their languages*[5]: as being sensible, that though indeed these must needs be considerable abatements to the *humour* of their comic scenes, yet, their ingenuity might possibly find means to remedy these defects by the invention and dextrous application of the *double entendre*, which, on our stage, is found to supply the place of rank *obscenity*, and, indeed, to do its office of exciting *laughter* almost as well.

But, as I said, there is no occasion for this *argument*. We may venture, without the help of it, to join these authorities to *that* of

[5] P. Alvarez Semedo, speaking of their poetry, says, "Le plus grand advantage et la plus grande utilité qu'en "ont tiré les Chinois, est cette grande modestie et re- "tenuë incomparable, qui se voit en leurs ecrits, *n'ayant* "*pas meme une lettre en tous leurs livres, ni en toutes leurs* "*ecritures, pour exprimer les parties honteuses de la nature.*" [Hist. Univ. de la Chine, p. 82. à Lyon 1667. 4to.]

Terence; which, together, enable us to conclude very fully, in opposition to the general sentiment, that *ridicule* is not of the *essence of comedy*[h].

But, because the general practice of the *Greek and Roman theatres*, which strongly countenance the other opinion, may still be thought to outweigh this single *Latin poet*, together with all the *eastern and western barbarians*, that can be thrown into the balance, let me go one step further, and, by explaining the rise and occasion of this *practice*, demonstrate, that, in the present case, their authority is, in fact, of no moment.

The form of the Greek, from whence the Roman and our drama is taken, though generally *improved* by reflexion and just criticism, yet, like so many other great inventions, was, in its original, the *product* of pure chance. Each of its species had sprung out of a *chorus-song*, which was afterwards incorporated into the legitimate drama, and found essential to its true form. But *reason*, which saw to

[h] Le ridicule est ce qu'il y a de plus essentiel a la Comedie. [P. Rapin, Reflex. sur la poes. p. 154. Paris 1684.]

establish what was *right* in this fortuitous conformation of the drama, did not equally succeed in detecting and separating what was *wrong*. For the *occasion* of this chorus-song, in their religious festivities, was widely different: the business *at one time*, being to express their gratitude, in celebrating the praises of their gods and heroes; at *another*, to indulge their mirth, in jesting and sporting among themselves. The character of their drama, which had its rise from hence,[i] conformed exactly to the difference of these *occa-*

[i] Οἱ μὲν Σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμεῖτο πράξεις, καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων τύχας· οἱ δὲ ὑβριστότεροι, τὰς τῶν φαύλων, ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΨΟΓΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΟΥΝΤΕΣ, ΩΣΠΕΡ ΕΤΕΡΟΙ ΥΜΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΚΩΜΙΑ. [ΠΕΡ. ΠΟΙΗΤ. κδ.] This is Aristotle's account of the origin of the different *species of* POETRY. They were occasioned, he says, by the different and even opposite *tempers and dispositions of men: those of a loftier spirit delighting in the encomiastic poetry, while the humbler sort betook themselves to satire.* But this, also, is the just account of the rise and character of the different *species of the* DRAMA. For they grew up, he tells us in this very chapter, from the DITHYRAMBIC, and PHALLIC songs. And who were the *men*, who chaunted *these*, but the ΣΕΜΝΟΤΕΡΟΙ, and ΕΥΤΕΛΕΣΤΕΡΟΙ, before-mentioned? And how were they *employed* in them, but the *former, in hymning the praises of Bacchus; the latter, in dealing about obscene jokes and taunting invectives on each other?* So that the *characters* of the men, and their *subjects*, being exactly

sions. Tragedy, through all its several successive stages of improvement, was serious and even solemn. And a gay or rather buffoon spirit was the characteristic of *comedy*.

We see, then, the *genius* of these two poems was accidentally fixed in agreement to their respective *originals*; consequent writers contenting themselves to embellish and perfect, not *change*, the primary form. The practice of the ancient stage is then of no further authority, than as it accords to just criticism. The solemn cast of their *tragedy*, indeed, bears the test, and is found to be suitable to its real nature. The same does not appear of the burlesque form of *comedy*; no reason having been given, why *it* must, of necessity, have the *ridiculous* for its object. Nay the effects of improved criticism on the later Greek comedy give a presumption of the direct contrary. For, in proportion to the gradual refinement of this *species* in the hands of its

the same in *both*, what is said of the *one* is equally applicable to the *other*. It was proper to observe this, or the reader might, perhaps, object to the use made of this passage, *here*, as well as *above*, where it is brought to illustrate Aristotle's notion of the *natures* of the tragic and comic poetry.

greatest masters, the buffoon cast of the comic drama was insensibly dropt and even grew into a severity, which departed at length very widely from the original idea. The admirable scholar of THEOPHRASTUS, who had been tutored in the exact study of human life, saw so much of the genuine character of true comedy, that he cleansed it, at once, from the greater part of those buffoonries, which had, till his time, defiled its nature. His great imitator, Terence, went still further; and, whether impelled by his native humour, or determined by his truer taste, mixed so little of the *ridiculous* in his comedy, as plainly shews, it might, in his opinion, subsist entirely without it. His *practice* indeed, and the theory, here delivered, nearly meet. And the conclusion is, that *comedy*, which is the image of private life, may take either character of *pleasant* or *serious*, as it chances, or even *unite* them into one piece; but that the *former* is, by no means, more essential to its constitution, than the *latter*.

I foresee but one objection, that can be made to this theory; which has, in effect, been obviated already. "It may be said, that, "if this account of *comedy* be just, it would "follow, that it might, with equal propriety,

" admit the gravest and most affecting events,
" which inferior life furnishes, as the lightest.
" Whereas it is notorious, that distresses of a
" deep and solemn nature, though faithfully
" copied from the fortunes of private men,
" would never be endured, under the name of
" *comedy*, on the stage. Nay, such repre-
" sentations would rather pass, in the public
" judgment, for legitimate *tragedies;* of which
" kind, we have, indeed, some examples in
" our language."

Two things are mistaken in this objection. *First*, it supposes, that deep distresses of every kind are inconsistent with comedy; the contrary of which may be learnt from the SELF-TORMENTOR of Terence. *Next*, it insinuates, that, if deep distresses of any kind may be admitted into comedy, the *deepest* may. Which is equally erroneous. For the *manners* being the proper object of comedy, the *distress* must not exceed a certain degree of *severity*, lest it draw off the mind from them, and confine it to the *action* only: as would be the case of *murder*, *adultery*, and other atrocious crimes, infesting *private*, as well as *public*, life, were they to be represented, in all their horrors, on the stage. And though some of these, as *adultery*, have

been brought, of late, into the comic scene, yet it was not till it had lost the atrocity of its nature, and was made the subject of mirth and pleasantry to the fashionable world. But for this happy disposition of the times, comedy, as managed by some of our writers, had lost its nature, and become *tragic*. And, yet, considered as *tragic*, such representations of low life had been improper. Because, where the intent is to *affect*, the subject is with more advantage taken from *high life*, all the circumstances being, there, more peculiarly adapted to answer that end.

The solution then of the difficulty is, in one word, this. All *distresses* are not *improper* in comedy; but such only as attach the mind to the *fable*, in neglect of the *manners*, which are its chief object. On the other hand, all *distresses* are not *proper* in tragedy; but such only as are of force to interest the mind in the *action*, preferably to the observation of the *manners*; which can only be done, or is done most effectually, when the *distressful event*, represented, is taken from *public life*. So that the *distresses*, spoken of, are equally unsuited to what the natures *both* of *comedy and tragedy*, respectively, demand.

CHAP. III.

OF M. DE FONTENELLE'S NOTION OF COMEDY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the pains I have taken, in the preceding chapters, to establish my theory of the comic drama, I find myself obliged to support it still further against the authority of a very eminent modern critic. M. de Fontenelle hath just now published two volumes of plays, among which are some comedies of a very singular character. They are not only, in a high degree, *pathetic*; but the scene of them is laid in *antiquity*; and great personages, such as *Kings, Princesses,* &c. are of the drama. He hath besides endeavoured to justify this extraordinary species of comedy by a very ingenious preface. It will therefore be necessary for me to examine this new system, and to obviate, as far as I can, the prejudices which the name of the author, and the intrinsic merit of the plays themselves, will occasion in favour of it.

His system, as explained in the preface to these comedies, is, briefly, this.

"The *subject* of dramatic representation, "he observes, is some event or action of *hu-* "*man life*, which can be considered only in "two views, as being either that of *public*, or "of *private*, persons. The end of such re- "presentation, continues he, is to *please*, "which it doth either by engaging the atten- "tion, or by moving the passions. The *for-* "*mer* is done by representing to us such "events as are *great, noble, or unexpected:* "The *latter* by such as are *dreadful, pitiable, "tender, or pleasant.* Of these several sources "of *pleasure*, he forms what he calls a *dra-* "*matic scale*, the extremes of which he admits "to be altogether inconsistent; no art being "sufficient to bring together the *grand*, the "*noble*, or the *terrible*, into the same piece "with the *pleasant or ridiculous.* The im- "pressions of these objects, he allows, are "perfectly opposed to each other. So that a "tragedy, which takes for its subject a *noble*, "or *terrible* event, can by no means admit "the *pleasant.* And a comedy, which repre- "sents a *pleasant* action, can never admit the "*terrible* or *noble.* But it is otherwise, he "conceives, with the intermediate species of "this scale. The *singular*, the *pitiable*, the "*tender*, which fill up the interval betwixt the "*noble* and *ridiculous*, are equally consistent

" with tragedy and comedy. An uncommon " stroke of Fortune may as well befall a pea- " sant as a prince. And two lovers of an in- " ferior condition may have as lively a passion " for each other, and, when some unlucky " event separates them, may deserve our pity " as much, as those of the highest fortune. " These situations then are equally suited to " both dramas. They will only be modified " in each a little differently. From hence he " concludes, that there may be *dramatic re-* " *presentations*, which are neither perfectly " tragedies nor perfectly comedies, but yet " partake of the nature of each, and that in " different proportions. There might be a " species of *tragedy*, for instance, which should " unite the *tender* with the *noble* in any de- " gree, or even subsist entirely by means of " the *tender*: And of *comedy*, which should " associate the *tender* with the *pleasant*, or " even retain the *tender* throughout to a cer- " tain degree to the entire exclusion of the " *pleasant*.

" As to his laying the *scene* of his comedy " in Greece, he thinks this practice sufficiently " justified by the practice of the French writers, " who make no scruple to lay their scene " abroad, as in *Spain* or *England*.

" Lastly, for what concerns the introduction " of great personages into the comic drama, " he observes that by *ordinary life*, which he " supposes the proper subject of comedy, he " understands as well that of Emperors and " Princes, at times when they are only men, " as of inferior persons. And he thinks it " very evident that what passes in the ordinary " *life*, so understood, of the greatest men, is " truly comic[k]."

This is a simple exposition of M. de Fontenelle's idea of comedy, which, however, he hath set off with great elegance and a plausibility of illustration, such as writers of his class are never at a loss to give to any subject they would recommend.

Now, tho' the principal aim of what I have to offer in confutation of this system be to combat the ingenious writer's notion of comedy, yet as the tenor of his *preface* leads him to deliver his sentiments also of tragedy, I shall not scruple intermixing, after his example, some reflexions on this latter drama.

M. de Fontenelle sets out with observing, that the end of dramatic representation is to

[k] *Pref. generale*, tom. vii. Par. 1751.

please. This end is very general. But he explains himself more precisely, by saying, "*this pleasure is of two kinds, and consists* "*either in attaching the mind or affecting it.*" And this is not much amiss. But his further explanation of these terms is suspicious. "The "mind, says he, is ATTACHED by the repre- "sentation of what is *great, noble, singular,* "or *unexpected:* It is AFFECTED by what is "*terrible, pitiable, tender,* or *pleasant*[1]." In this enumeration he forgets the merely *natural* draught of the manners. Yet this is surely one of the means by which the drama is enabled to *attach* the spectator. With me, I confess, this is the first excellence of comedy. Nor could he mean to include this source of pleasure under his *second* division. For tho' a lively picture of the manners may in some sort be said to *affect* us, yet certainly not as coming under the consideration of what is *terrible, pitiable, tender,* or *ridiculous,* but simply of what is *natural.* The picture is *pleasant* or otherwise, as it chances; but is always the source of entertainment to the observer. When the pleasantry is high, it takes

[1] "On attache par le grand, par le noble, par le rare, "par l'imprévû. On émeut par le terrible ou affreux, "par le pitoyable, par le tendre, par le plaisant ou ridi- "cule." p. xiv

indeed the passion of *ridicule*. In other instances, it can scarcely be said to *move*, "emouvoir." Now this I take to be a very considerable omission. For if the observation of character be a *pleasure*, which comedy is more particularly qualified to give, and which is not in any degree so compatible with tragedy, does not this bid fair for being the *proper* end of comedy? Human life, he says, which is the subject of the drama, can only be regarded in two views, as either that *of the great and principally of kings*, and that of *private men*. Now the *attachments* and *emotions*, he speaks of, are excited more powerfully and to more advantage in a representation of the *former*. That which is *peculiar* to a draught of *ordinary life*, or which is attained *most perfectly* by it, is the delight arising from a just exhibition of the manners. No, he will say. The *pleasant* belongs as peculiarly to a picture of common life, as the *natural*. Surely not. Common life *distorted*, or what we call *farce*, gives the entertainment of *ridicule* more perfectly than comedy. The only pleasure, which an exposition of *ordinary life* affords, distinct from that we receive from a view of *high life* on the one hand, and ordinary life *disfigured* on the other, is the satisfaction of contemplating the *truth of character*. How-

ever then this species of representation may be improved by incorporating other kinds of excellence with it, is not *this, of pleasing* by the *truth* of character, to be considered as the *appropriate* end of comedy?

I don't dispute the propriety of serious or even affecting comedies. I have already explained myself as to this point, and have shewn under what restrictions *the weeping comedy, la larmoyante comedie,* as the French call it, may be admitted on my plan. The main question is, whether there be any foundation in nature for two distinct and separate species *only* of the drama; or whether, as he pretends, a certain *scale,* which connects by an insensible communication the several modifications of dramatic representation, unites and incorporates the two species into one.

It is true the laws of the drama, as formed by Aristotle out of the Greek poets, can of themselves be no rule to us in this matter; because these poets had given no example of such intermediate species. This, for aught appears to the contrary, may be an extension of the province of the drama. The question then must be tried by the success of this new prac-

tice, compared with the general dictates of common sense.

For I perfectly agree with this judicious critic, that we have a right to inquire if, in what concerns the stage, we are not sometimes governed by *established customs* instead of rules; for *Rules* they will not deserve to be esteemed, till they have undergone the rigid scrutiny of reason[m].

In respect of the *Practice*, then, it must be owned, there are many stories in private life capable of being worked up in such a manner as to move the passions strongly; and, on the contrary, many subjects taken from the great world capable of diverting the spectator by a pleasant picture of the manners. And lastly, it is also true, that both these ends may be affected together, in some degree, in either piece. But here is the point of enquiry. Whether if the end in view be to *affect*, this will not be accomplished BETTER by taking a

[m] "Que nous sommes en droit d'examiner si, en fait "de Theatre, nous n'aurions pas quelquefois des *habitudes* "au lieu de *regles*, car les regles ne peuvent l'être qu' "après avoir subi les rigueurs du tribunal de la raison" p. 37.

subject from the public than private fortunes of men: Or, if the End be to *please by the truth of character*, whether we are not likely to perceive this pleasure more FULLY when the story is of private, rather than of public life? For, as Aristotle said finely on a like occasion, *we are not to look for every sort of pleasure from tragedy* [or comedy] *but that which is peculiarly proper to each*[n]. "Human life, this writer says, "can be considered but as "*high* or *low*;" and "a representation of it "can please only as it *attaches*, or *affects*." I ask then, to which sort of life shall the dramatic poet confine himself, when he would endeavour to raise these *affections* or these *attachments* to the highest pitch. The answer is plain. For if the poet would excite the tender passions, they will rise higher of necessity, when awakened by noble subjects, than if called forth by such as are of ordinary and familiar notice. This is occasioned by what one may call a TRANSITION OF THE PASSIONS: that affection of the mind which is produced by the impression of great objects, being more easily convertible into the stronger degrees of pity and commiseration, than such as arises from a

[n] Οὐ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν. Poiнт. κ. ιδ'.

view of the concerns of common life. The more *important* the interest, the greater part our minds take in it, and the more susceptible are we of *passion*.

On the other hand, when the intended pleasure is to result from strong pictures of human nature, this will be felt more entirely, and with more sincerity, when we are at leisure to attend to them in the representation of inferior persons, than when the rank of the speaker, or dignity of the subject, is constantly drawing some part of our observation to itself. In a word, though *mixed dramas* may give us pleasure, yet the pleasure, in either kind, will be LESS in proportion to the mixture. And the *end* of each will be then attained MOST PERFECTLY when its character, according to the ancient practice, is observed.

To consider then the writer's favourite position, that *le pitoyable* and *le tendre* are "common both to tragedy and comedy." The position, in general, is true. The difficulty is in fixing the degree, with which it ought to prevail in each. If *passion* predominates in a picture of private life, I call it a *tragedy* of private story, because it produces the *end* which tragedy designs. If *humour* predominates in a

draught of public life, I call it a *comedy* of public story, because it gives the *pleasure* of pure comedy. Let these then be two new species of the drama, if you please, and let new names be invented for them. Yet, were I a poet, I should certainly adhere to the old practice. That is, if I wanted to produce *passion*, I should think myself able to raise it highest on a great subject. And if I aimed to *attach* by *humour*, I should depend on catching the whole attention of the spectator more successfully on a familiar subject.

But by a *familiar subject*, this critic will say, he means, as I do, a subject taken from *ordinary life;* and that the affairs of kings and princes may very properly come into comedy under this view. Besides the reason already produced against this innovation, I have this further exception to it. The business of comedy, he will allow, is in part at least to exhibit the *manners*. Now the princely or heroic comedy is singularly improper for this end. If persons of so distinguished a rank be the actors in comedy, propriety demands that they be shewn in conformity to their characters in real life. But now that very politeness, which reigns in the courts of princes and the houses of the great, prevents the *manners* from

shewing themselves, at least with that distinctness and *relief* which we look for in dramatic characters. Inferior personages, acting with less reserve and caution, afford the fittest occasion to the poet of expressing their genuine tempers and dispositions. Or, if a picture of the manners be expected from the introduction of great persons, it can be only in tragedy, where the importance of the interests and the strong play of the passions strip them of their borrowed disguises, and lay open their true characters. So that the princely, or *heroic*, comedy is the least fitted, of any kind of drama, to furnish this pleasure.

The ancients appear to have had no doubt at all on the matter. The tragedy on low life, and comedy on high life, were refinements altogether unknown to them. What then hath occasioned this revolution of taste amongst us? Principally, I conceive, these three things.

1. The comedy on high life hath arisen from a *different state of government*. In the free towns of Greece there was no room for that distinction of high and low comedy, which the moderns have introduced. And the reason was, the members of those communities were so nearly on a level, that any one was a repre-

sentative of the rest. There was no standing subordination of royalty, nobility, and commonalty, as with us. Their way of ennobling their characters was, by making them Generals, Ambassadors, Magistrates, &c. and then, in that public view, they were fit personages for tragedy. When stripped of these ensigns of authority, they became simple citizens.

Amongst us, persons of elevated rank make a separate order in the community, whose private lives however might, no doubt, be the subject of comic representation. Why then are not these fit personages for comedy? The reason has been given. They want *dramatic manners*. Or, if they did not, their elevated and separate estate makes the generality conceive with such reverence of them, that it would shock their notions of high life to see them employed in a course of comic adventures. And of this M. de Fontenelle himself was sufficiently sensible. For, speaking in another place of the importance which the tragic action receives from the dignity of its persons, he says, "When the actions are of "such a kind as that, without losing any "thing of their beauty, they might pass be-"tween inferior persons, the names of kings "and princes are nothing but a foreign orna-

" ment, which the poet gives to his subject. " Yet *this ornament, foreign as it may be, is* " *necessary: so fated are we to be always* " *dazzled by titles*[o]." Should he not have seen then, that this pageantry of titles, which is so requisite to raise the dignity of the tragic drama, must for the same reason prevent the familiarity of the comic? The great themselves are, no doubt, in this, as other instances, above *vulgar* prejudices. But the dramatic poet writes for the people.

2. The tragedy on low life, I suspect, has been chiefly owing to our *modern romances:* which have brought the tender passion into great repute. It is the constant and almost sole object of *le pitoyable* and *le tendre* in our drama. Now the prevalency of this passion in all degrees hath made it thought an indifferent matter, whether the story, that exemplifies it, be taken from low or high life. As it rages equally in both, the pathos, it was believed, would be just the same. And it is true, if tragedy confine itself to the display of this passion, the difference will be less sensible than in other instances. Because the concern terminates more directly in the *tender pair*

[o] *Reflex. sur la Poes.* p. 132.

themselves, and does not so necessarily extend itself to others. Yet to heighten this same pathos by the *grand* and *important*, would methinks be the means of affording a still higher pleasure.

3. After all, that effusion of *softness* which prevails to such a degree in all our dramas, comic as well as tragic, to the exclusion of every other interest, is, perhaps, best accounted for by this writer. As the matter is delicate, I chuse to give it in his own words: "On s'ima-"gine naturellement, que les piéces Grecques "& les nôtres ont été jugées au même tribunal, "à celui d'un public assés egal dans les deux "nations; mais cela n'est pas tout-a-fait vrai. "Dans le tribunal d'Athenes, *les femmes* "n'avoient pas de voix, ou n'en avoient que "très peu. Dans le tribunal de Paris, c'est "précisément le contraire; ici il est donc "question de plaire aux femmes, qui assuré-"ment aimeront mieux le pitoyable & le ten-"dre, que terrible et même le grand." He adds, "*Et je ne crois pas au fond qu'elles* "*ayent grand tort.*" And what gallant man but would subscribe to this opinion?

On the whole, this attempt of M. de Fontenelle, to innovate in the province of comedy,

puts one in mind of that he made, many years ago, in pastoral poetry. It is exactly the same spirit which has governed this polite writer in both adventures. He was once for bringing courtiers in masquerade into *Arcadia*. And now he would set them unmasked on the comic stage. Here, at least, he thought they would be in place. But the simplicity of pastoral dialogue would not suffer the one; and the familiarity of comic action forbids the other. It must be confessed, however, he hath succeeded better in the example of his comedies, than his pastorals. And no wonder. For what we call the *fashions* and *manners* are confined to certain conditions of life, so that *pastoral courtiers* are an evident contradiction and absurdity. But, the *appetites and passions* extending through all ranks, hence low tricks and low amours are thought to suit the minister and sharper alike. However it be, the fact is, that M. de Fontenelle hath succeeded best in his *comedies*. And as his theory is likely to gain more credit from the success of his practice than the force of his reasoning, I think it proper to close these remarks with an observation or two upon it.

There are, I observed, three things to be considered in his comedies, his *introduction of*

great personages, his practice of laying the scene in antiquity, and his pathos.

Now to see the impropriety of the *first* of these innovations, we need only observe with what art he endeavours to conceal it. His very dexterity in managing his comic heroes clearly shews the natural repugnance he felt in his own mind betwixt the representation of such characters, and even his own idea of the comic drama.

The TYRANT is a strange title of a comedy. It required singular address to familiarize this frightful personage to our conceptions. Which yet he hath tolerably well done, but by such expedients as confute his general theory. For, to bring him down to the level of a comic character, he gives us to understand, that the *Tyrant* was an usurper, who from a very mean birth had forced his way into the tyranny. And to lower him still more, we find him represented, not only as odious to his people, but of a very contemptible character. He further makes him the tyrant only of a small Greek town; so that he passes, with the modern reader, for little more than the Mayor of a corporation. There is also a plain illusion in making a *simple citizen* demand his daughter

in marriage. For under the cover of this word, which conveys the idea of a person in lower life, we think very little of the dignity of a free citizen of Corinth. Whence it appears that the poet felt the necessity of unkinging this tyrant as far as possible, before he could make a comic character of him.

The case of his ABDOLONIME is still easier. 'Tis true, the structure of the fable requires us to have an eye to royalty, but all the pride and pomp of the regal character is studiously kept out of sight. Besides, the affair of royalty does not commence till the action draws to a conclusion, the persons of the drama being all simple particulars, and even of the lowest figure through the entire course of it.

The King of Sidon is, further, a paltry sovereign, and a creature of Alexander. And the characters of the persons, which are indeed admirably touched, are purposely contrived to lessen our ideas of sovereignty.

The LYSIANASSE is a tragedy in form, of that kind which hath a happy catastrophe. The *persons*, *subject*, every thing so important, and attaches the mind so intirely to the event, that nothing interests more.

As to his *laying the scene in antiquity, and especially in the free towns of Greece,* I would recommend it as an admirable expedient to all those who are disposed to follow him in this new province of heroic comedy. For amongst other advantages, it gives the writer an occasion to fill the courts of his princes with *simple citizens,* which, as was observed, by no means answer to our ideas of nobility. But in any other view I cannot say much for the practice. It is for obvious reasons highly inconvenient. Even this writer found it so, when in one of his plays, the MACATE, he was obliged to break through the propriety of ancient manners in order to adapt himself to the modern taste. His duel, as he himself says, " *a l'air* " *bien françois et bien peu grec.*" The reader, if he pleases, may see his apology for this transgression of decorum. Or, if there were no inconvenience of this sort, the representation of characters after the *antique* must, on many occasions, be cold and disgusting. At least none but professed scholars can be taken with it.

Nor is the usage of the Latin writers any precedent. For, besides that Horace, we know, condemned it as suitable only to the infancy of their comic poetry, the manners, laws, religion of the Greeks were in the main

so similar to their own, that the difference was hardly discernible. Or if it were otherwise in some points, the neighbourhood of this famous people and the intercourse the Romans had with them, would bring them perfectly acquainted with such difference. And this last reflexion shews how insufficient it was for the author to excuse his own practice from the authority of his countrymen; who, says he, "never scruple laying their scene in Spain or "England." Are the manners of ancient Greece as familiar to a French pit, as those of these two countries?

Lastly, I have very little to object to the *pathos* of his comedy. When it is subservient to the *manners*, as in the TESTAMENT and ABDOLONIME, I think it admirable. When it exceeds this degree and takes the attention intirely, as in the LYSIANASSE, it gives a pleasure indeed, but not the pleasure appropriate to comedy. I regard it as a faint imperfect species of tragedy. After all, I fear the *tender and pitiable* in comedy, though it must afford the highest pleasure to sensible and elegant minds, is not perfectly suited to the apprehensions of the generality. Are they susceptible of the soft and delicate emotions which the fine distress in the *Testament* is intended to

raise? Every one indeed is capable of being delighted through the *passions*; but they must be worked up, as in tragedy, to a greater height, before the generality can receive that delight from them. The same objection, it will be said, holds against the finer strokes of character. Not, I think, with the same force. I doubt our sense of imitation, especially of the *ridiculous*, is quicker than our humanity. But I determine nothing. Both these pleasures are perfectly consistent. And my idea of comedy requires only that the *pathos* be kept in subordination to the *manners*.

CHAP. IV.

OF THE PROVINCE OF FARCE.

THUS much then for the general idea of COMEDY. If considered more accurately, it is, further, of *two kinds*. And in considering these we shall come at a just notion of the province of FARCE. For this *mirror of private life* either, 1. reflects such qualities and characters, as are common *to human nature at large:* or, 2. it represents the whims, extravagances, and caprices, which characterize the folly of *particular persons or times.*

Again, *each* of these is, further, to be subdivided into *two species.* For 1. the representations of *common nature* may either be taken *accurately,* so as to reflect *a faithful and exact image* of their original; which alone is *that* I would call COMEDY, as best agreeing to the description which Cicero gives of it, when he terms it IMAGINEM VERITATIS. Or, they may be forced and overcharged above the simple and just proportions of *nature;* as when

the excesses of a *few* are given for *standing* characters, when not the man is described, but the *passion*, or when, in the draught of the man, the leading feature is extended beyond measure: And in these cases the representation holds of the lower province of FARCE. In like manner, 2. the other *species*, consisting in the representation of *partial nature*, either transcribes such characters as are peculiar to *certain countries or times*, of which *our comedy* is, in great measure, made up; or it presents the image of *some real individual person*; which was the distinguishing character of the *old comedy* properly so called.

Both these kinds evidently belong to FARCE: not only as failing in that general and universal imitation of nature, which is alone deserving the name of comedy, but, also, for this reason, that, being more directly written for the present purpose of discrediting certain *characters* or *persons*, it is found convenient to exaggerate their peculiarities and enlarge their features; and so, on a double account, they are to be referred to that *class*.

And thus the *three forms of dramatic composition*, the only ones which good sense acknowledges, are kept distinct: and the

proper END and CHARACTER of each, clearly understood.

1. *Tragedy and Comedy*, by their lively but faithful representations, cannot fail to *instruct*. Such natural exhibitions of the human character, being set before us in the clear mirror of the drama, must needs serve to the highest *moral uses*, in awakening that instinctive approbation, which we cannot withhold from *virtue*, or in provoking the not less necessary detestation of *vice*. But this, though it be their best *use*, is by no means their primary *intention*. Their proper and immediate *end* is, to PLEASE: the *one*, more especially by interesting the *affections*; the *other*, by *a just and delicate imitation of real life*. *Farce*, on the contrary, professes to *entertain*, but this, in order more effectually to serve the interests of virtue and good sense. Its proper *end* and purpose (if we allow it to have any reasonable one) is, then, to INSTRUCT. Which the reader will understand me as saying, not of what we know by the name of *farce* on the modern stage (whose *prime* intention can hardly be thought even that low one, ascribed to it by Mr. Dryden, *of* entertaining *citizens, country gentlemen, and Covent Garden fops)*, but of the legitimate *end* of this *drama;* known

to the Ancients under the name of the *old Comedy*, but having neither name nor existence, properly speaking, among the Moderns. Of which we may say, as Mr. Dryden did, but with less propriety, of Comedy, "*That it* "*is a sharp manner of* instruction *for the* "*vulgar, who are never well amended, till* "*they are more than sufficiently exposed.*" [Pref. to Trans. of Fresnoy, p. xix.]

2. Though tragedy and comedy respect the *same general* END, yet pursuing it by *different means*, hence it comes to pass, their CHARACTERS are wholly different. For tragedy, aiming at *pleasure*, principally through the *affections*, whose flow must not be checked and interrupted by any counter impressions: and comedy, as we have seen, addressing itself *principally* to our *natural sense of resemblance and imitation*; it follows, that the *ridiculous* can never be associated with tragedy, without destroying its *nature*, though with the *serious comic* it very well consists.

And here the *practice* coincides with the *rule*. All exact writers, though they constantly mix *grave and pleasant* scenes together in the same *comedy*, yet never presume to do this in *tragedy*, and so keep the two species of

tragedy and comedy themselves perfectly distinct. But,

3. It is quite otherwise with *comedy* and *farce*. These almost perpetually run into each other. And yet the reason of the thing demands as intire and perfect a separation in this case, as in the other. For the perfection of *comedy* lying in the accuracy and fidelity of universal representation, and *farce* professedly neglecting or rather purposely transgressing the limits of common nature and just decorum, they clash entirely with each other. And *comedy* must so far fail of giving the *pleasure*, appropriate to its design, as it allies itself with *farce*; while *farce*, on the other hand, forfeits the *use*, it intends, of promoting popular ridicule, by restraining itself within the exact rules of *Nature*, which Comedy observes.

But there is little occasion to guard against this *latter* abuse. The danger is all on the other side. And the passion for what is now called *Farce*, the shadow of the Old Comedy, has, in fact, possessed the modern poets to such a degree that we have scarcely one example of a comedy, without this gross mixture. If any are to be excepted from this censure in Moliere, they are his *Misanthrope* and *Tar-*

tuffe, which are accordingly, by common allowance, the best of his large collection. In proportion as his other plays have less or more of this farcical turn, their true value hath been long since determined.

Of our own comedies, such of them, I mean, as are worthy of criticism, Ben Jonson's *Alchymist* and *Volpone* bid the fairest for being written in this genuine unmixed manner. Yet, though their merits are very great, severe Criticism might find something to object even to these. The ALCHYMIST, some will think, is exaggerated throughout, and so, at best, belongs to that species of comedy, which we have before called *particular and partial.* At least, the extravagant pursuit so strongly exposed in that play, hath now, of a long time, been forgotten; so that we find it difficult to enter fully into the humour of this highly-wrought character. And, in general, we may remark of such characters, that they are a strong temptation to the writer to exceed the bounds of truth in his draught of them at *first*, and are further liable to an imperfect, and even unfair sentence from the reader *afterwards.* For the welcome reception, which these pictures of prevailing *local* folly meet with on the stage, cannot but induce the poet, almost

without design, to inflame the representation: And the want of *archetypes*, in a little time, makes it pass for immoderate, were it originally given with ever so much discretion and justice. So that whether the *Alchymist* be farcical or not, it will *appear*, at least, to have this note of Farce, "That the principal character is exaggerated." But then this is all we must affirm. For as to the *subject* of this Play's being a *local folly*, which seems to bring it directly under the denomination of Farce, it is but just to make a distinction. Had the *end and purpose* of the Play been to expose *Alchymy*, it had been liable to this objection. But this mode of *local folly*, is employed as the *means* only of exposing *another* folly, extensive as our Nature and coeval with it, namely *Avarice*. So that the subject has all the requisites of true *Comedy*. It is just otherwise, we may observe, in the *Devil's an Ass;* which therefore properly falls under our censure. For there, the folly of the time, *Projects and Monopolies*, are brought in to be exposed, as the *end and purpose* of the comedy.

On the whole, the *Alchymist* is a Comedy in just form, but a little *Farcical* in the extension of one of its characters.

The VOLPONE, is a subject so manifestly fitted for the entertainment of all times, that it stands in need of no vindication. Yet neither, I am afraid, is this Comedy, in all respects, a complete model. There are even some Incidents of a farcical invention; particularly the *Mountebank Scene* and *Sir Politique's Tortoise* are in the taste of the *old comedy;* and without its rational purpose. Besides, the *humour* of the dialogue is sometimes on the point of becoming inordinate, as may be seen in the pleasantry of *Corbaccio's mistakes through deafness,* and in other instances. And we shall not wonder that the best of his plays are liable to some objections of this sort, if we attend to the *character* of the writer. For his nature was severe and rigid, and this in giving a strength and manliness, gave, at times too, an intemperance to his satyr. His taste for ridicule was strong but indelicate, which made him not overcurious in the choice of his *topics.* And lastly, his *style* in picturing characters, though masterly, was without that elegance of *hand,* which is required to correct and allay the force of so bold a colouring. Thus, the biass of his nature leading him to Plautus rather than Terence for his model, it is not to be wondered that his wit is too frequently caustic; his raillery coarse; and his humour excessive.

Some later writers for the stage have, no doubt, avoided these defects of the exactest of our old dramatists. But do they reach his excellencies? Posterity, I am afraid, will judge otherwise, whatever may be now thought of some more fashionable comedies. And if they do not, neither the state of general manners, nor the turn of the public taste, appears to be such as countenances the expectation of greater improvements. To those who are not over-sanguine in their hopes, our forefathers will perhaps be thought to have furnished (what, in nature, seem linked together) the fairest example of *dramatic*, as of *real manners*.

But here it will probably be said, an affected zeal for the honour of our old poets has betrayed their unwary advocate into a concession, which discredits his whole pains on this subject. For to what purpose, may it be asked, this waste of dramatic criticism, when, by the allowance of the idle speculatist himself, his theory is likely to prove so unprofitable, at least, if it be not ill-founded? The only part I can take in this nice conjuncture, is to screen myself behind the authority of a much abler critical theorist, who had once the misfortune to find himself in these unlucky circumstances, and has apologized for it. The

objection is fairly urged by this fine writer; and in so profound and speculative an age, as the present, I presume to suggest no other answer, than he has thought fit to give to it. "Speculations of this sort, says he, do not be-"stow genius on those who have it not; they "do not, perhaps, afford any great assistance "to those who have; and most commonly the "men of genius are even incapable of being "assisted by speculation. To what use then "do they serve? Why, to lead up *to the* "*first principles of beauty* such persons as "love reasoning and are fond of reducing, un-"der the controul of philosophy, subjects that "appear the most independent of it, and "which are generally thought abandoned to "the caprice of taste[p]."

p "Ces sortes de speculations ne donnent point de "genie à ceux qui en manquent; elles n'aident beaucoup "ceux qui en ont: et le plus souvent même les gens de "génie sont incapables d'être aidées par les speculations. "A quoi donc sont-elles bonnes? A faire remonter jus-"qu'aux premieres idées du beau quelques gens qui aiment "la raisonnement, et se plaisent à reduire sous l'empire "de la philosophie les choses qui en paroissent le plus in-"dépendantes, et que l'on croit communément abandon-"nées à la bizarrerie des goûts." M. DE FONTENELLE.

A

DISCOURSE

ON

POETICAL IMITATION.

DISSERTATION III.

ON

POETICAL IMITATION.

I UNDERTAKE, in the following discourse, to consider TWO QUESTIONS, in which the credit of almost all great writers, since the time of *Homer*, is vitally concerned.

First, "*Whether that Conformity in Phrase* "*or Sentiment between two writers of dif-* "*ferent times, which we call* IMITATION, *may* "*not with probability enough, for the most* "*part, be accounted for from general causes,* "*arising from our common nature; that is,* "*from the exercise of our natural faculties* "*on such objects as lie in common to all ob-* "*servers?*

Secondly, "*Whether, in the case of con-*
"*fessed Imitations, any certain and neces-*
"*sary conclusion holds to the disadvantage*
"*of the natural* GENIUS *of the imitator?*"—
QUESTIONS, which there seems no fit method of resolving, but by taking the matter pretty deep, and deducing it from its *first principles*.

SECTION I.

All *Poetry*, to speak with Aristotle and the Greek critics (if for so plain a point authorities be thought wanting) is, properly, *imitation*. It is, indeed, the noblest and most extensive of the mimetic arts; having all creation for its object, and ranging the entire circuit of universal being. In this view every wondrous *original*, which ages have gazed at, as the offspring of creative fancy; and of which poets themselves, to do honour to their inventions, have feigned, as of the immortal panoply of their heroes, that it came down from heaven, is itself but a *copy*, a transcript from some brighter page of this vast volume of the universe. Thus all is *derived;* all is *unoriginal*. And the office of genius is but to select the fairest forms of things, and to present them in due *place* and *circumstance*, and in the richest colouring of *expression*, to the imagination. This primary or original *copying*, which in the ideas of Philosophy is *Imitation*, is, in the language of Criticism, called Invention.

Again; of the endless variety of these *original forms*, which the poet's eye is incessantly traversing, those, which take his attention most, his active mimetic faculty prompts him to convert into fair and living *resemblances*. This magical operation the *divine* philosopher (whose fervid fancy, though it sometimes obscures[a] his reasoning, yet never fails to clear and brighten his imagery) excellently illustrates by the similitude of a *mirror*; "*which*, "says he, *as you turn about and oppose to the* "*surrounding world, presents you instantly* "*with a* SUN, STARS, *and* SKIES; *with your* "OWN, *and every* OTHER *living form; with* "*the* EARTH, *and its several appendages of* "TREES, PLANTS, *and* FLOWERS[b]." Just so, on whatever side the poet turns his imagination, the shapes of things immediately imprint themselves upon it, and a new corresponding creation reflects the old one. This shadowy ideal world, though unsubstantial as the *American vision of souls*[c], yet glows with such apparent life, that it becomes, thenceforth, the object of other mirrors, and is itself *original*

[a] Μελαίνει τε, says Dionysius of Halicarnassus, speaking of his figurative manner, τὸ σαφὲς καὶ ζόφῳ ποιεῖ παραπλήσιον· [T. ii. p. 204. *Ed. Hudson.*]

[b] PLATO DE REPUB. lib. x.

[c] Spectator, No. 56.

to future reflexions. This secondary or derivative image, is that alone which Criticism considers under the Idea of IMITATION.

And here the difficulty, we are about to examine, commences. For the poet, in his quick researches through all his stores and materials of *beauty*, meeting every where, in his progress, these *reflected forms*; and deriving from them his stock of imagery, as well as from the real subsisting objects of nature, the reader is often at a loss (for the poet himself is not always aware of it) to discern the *original* from the *copy*; to know, with certainty, if the *sentiment*, or *image*, presented to him, be directly taken from the *life*, or be itself, a lively transcript, only, of some former copy. And this difficulty is the greater, because the *original*, as well as the *copy*, is always at hand for the poet to turn to, and we can rarely be certain, since both were equally in his power, which of the two he chose to make the object of his own *imitation*. For it is not enough to say here, as in the case of *reflexions*, that the latter is always the weaker, and of course betrays itself by the degree of faintness, which, of necessity, attends a *copy*. This, indeed, hath been said by one, to whose judgment a peculiar deference is owing. Quic-

QUID ALTERI SIMILE EST, NECESSE EST MINUS SIT EO, QUOD IMITATUR[d]. But it holds only of strict and scrupulous *imitations*. And of such alone, I think, it was intended; for the explanation follows, *ut umbra corpore, & imago facie, & actus histrionum veris affectibus;* that is, where the artist confines himself to the single view of taking a faithful and exact transcript. And even this can be allowed only, when the copyist is of inferior, or at most but of equal, talents. Nay, it is not certainly to be relied upon even *then*; as may appear from what we are told of an inferior painter's [Andrea del Sarto's] copying a portrait of the divine Raphael. The story is well known. But, as an aphorism, brought to determine the merits of *imitation*, in general, nothing can be falser or more delusive. For, 1. Besides the supposed *original*, the object itself, as was observed, is before the poet, and he may catch from thence, and infuse into his piece, the same glow of real life, which animated the *first copy*. 2. He may also take in circumstances, omitted or overlooked before in the *common* object, and so give new and additional vigour to his imitation. Or, 3. He may possess a stronger, and more plastic

[d] QUINCTIL. lib. x. c. 11.

genius, and therefore be enabled to touch, with more force of expression, even those particulars, which he professedly imitates.

On all these accounts, the difficulty of distinguishing betwixt *original*, and *secondary*, imitations is apparent. And it is of importance, that this *difficulty* be seen in its full light. Because, if the *similarity*, observed in two or more writers, may, for the most part, and with the highest probability, be accounted for from *general principles*, it is superfluous at least, if not unfair, to have recourse to the *particular* charge of *imitation*.

Now to see how far the same common principles of nature will go towards effecting the *similarity*, here spoken of, it is necessary to consider very distinctly

I. THE MATTER; *and*

II. THE MANNER, *of all poetical imitation.*

I. In all that range of *natural objects*, over which the restless imagination of the poet expatiates, there is no subject of picture or

imitation, that is not reducible to one or other of the *three following classes.* 1. The *material world, or that vast compages of corporeal forms, of which this universe is compounded.* 2. *The internal workings and movements of his own mind, under which I comprehend the manners, sentiments, and passions.* 3. *Those internal operations, that are made objective to sense by the outward signs of gesture, attitude, or action.* Besides these I know of no source, whence the artist can derive a single sentiment or image. There needs no new distinction in favour of *Homer's gods, Milton's angels,* or *Shakespear's witches;* it being clear, that these are only *human* characters, diversified by such attributes and manners, as superstition, religion, or even wayward fancy, had assigned to each.

1. The material universe, or what the painters call *still life,* is the object of that species of poetical imitation, we call *descriptive.* This beauteous arrangement of natural objects, which arrests the attention on all sides, makes a necessary and forceable impression on the human mind. We are so constituted, as to have a quick *perception* of beauty in the *forms, combinations,* and *aspects* of things

about us; which the philosopher may amuse himself in explaining from remote and insufficient considerations; but consciousness and common feeling will never suffer us to doubt of its being entirely *natural*. Accordingly we may observe, that it operates universally on all men; more especially the young and unexperienced; who are not less transported by the *novelty*, than *beauty* of material objects. But its impressions are strongest on those, whom nature hath touched with a ray of that celestial fire, which we call true *genius*. Here the workings of this instinctive sense are so powerful, that, to judge from its effects, one should conclude, it perfectly intranced and bore away the mind, as in a fit of rapture. Whenever the form of natural beauty presents itself, though but casually, to the mind of the poet; busied it may be, and intent on the investigation of quite other objects; his imagination takes fire, and it is with difficulty that he restrains himself from quitting his proper pursuit, and stopping a while to survey and delineate the enchanting image. This is the character of what we call a *luxuriant fancy*, which all the rigour of art can hardly keep down; and we give the highest praise of judgment to those few, who have been able to discipline and confine it within due limits.

I insist the more on this strong *influence of external beauty*, because it leads, I think, to a clear view of the subject before us, so far as it respects *descriptive poetry*. These *living forms* are, without any change, presented to observation in every age and country. There needs but opening the eyes, and these forms necessarily imprint themselves on the fancy; and the love of *imitation*, which naturally accompanies and keeps pace with this *sense of beauty* in the poet, is continually urging him to translate them into *description*. These descriptions will, indeed, have different degrees of *colouring*, according to the force of genius in the imitator; but the *outlines* are the same in all; in the weak, faint sketches of an ordinary Gothic designer, as in the living pictures of *Homer*.

An instance will explain my meaning. Amidst all that diversity of natural objects, which the poet delights to paint, nothing is so *taking* to his imagination, as *rural scenery*; which is, always, the *first* passion of *good* poets, and the *only* one that seems, in any degree, to animate and inspirit *bad* ones. Now let us take a description of such a scene; suppose that which *Aelian* hath left us of the Grecian TEMPE, given from the life and without

the heightenings of poetic ornament; and we shall see how little the imagination of the most fanciful poets hath ever done towards improving upon it. *Aelian's* description is given in these words.

"The Thessalian TEMPE is a place situate "between Olympus and Ossa; which are "mountains of an exceeding great height; and "look, as if they once had been joined, but "were afterwards separated from each other, "by some god, for the sake of opening in the "midst that large plain, which stretches in "length to about five miles, and in breadth a "hundred paces, or, in some parts, more. "Through the middle of this plain runs the "*Peneus*, into which several lesser currents "empty themselves, and, by the confluence "of their waters, swell it into a river of great "size. This vale is abundantly furnished "with all manner of *arbours and resting "places;* not such as the arts of human in- "dustry contrive, but which the bounty of "spontaneous nature, ambitious, as it were, "to make a shew of all her beauties, provided "for the supply of this fair residence, in the "very original structure and formation of the "place. For there is plenty of *ivy* shooting "forth in it, which flourishes and grows so

" thick, that, like the generous and leafy vine,
" it crawls up the trunks of tall trees, and
" twining its foliage round their arms and
" branches, becomes almost incorporated with
" them. The flowering *smilax*[e] also is there
" in great abundance; which running up the
" acclivities of the hills, and spreading the
" close texture of its leaves and tendrils on all
" sides, perfectly covers and shades them; so
" that no part of the bare rock is seen; but
" the whole is hung with the verdure of a
" thick, inwoven herbage, presenting the most
" agreeable spectacle to the eye. Along the
" level of the plain, there are frequent tufts of
" trees, and long continued ranges of arching
" bowers, affording the most grateful shelter
" from the heats of summer; which are fur-
" ther relieved by the frequent streams of clear
" and fresh water, continually winding through
" it. The tradition goes, that these waters are
" peculiarly good for bathing, and have many
" other medicinal virtues. In the thickets and
" bushes of this dale are numberless *singing*
" birds, every where fluttering about, whose
" warblings take the ear of passengers, and

[e] Botanists give it the name of *oriental bind weed*. It is said to be a very rambling plant, which climbs up trees, and rises to a great height in the Levant, where it particularly flourishes.

" cheat the labours of their way through it. " On the banks of the *Peneus*, on either side, " are dispersed irregularly those *resting places*, " before spoken of; while the river itself glides " through the middle of the lawn, with a soft " and quiet lapse; over-hung with the shades " of trees, planted on its borders, whose in- " termingled branches keep off the rays of the " sun, and furnish the opportunity of a cool " and temperate navigation upon it. The " worship of the gods, and the perpetual fra- " grancy of sacrifices and burning odours, fur- " ther consecrate the place, &c." [*Var. Hist.* lib. III. c. 1.]

Now this picture, which Aelian took from nature, and which any one, if he hath not seen the several parts of it subsisting together, may easily compound for himself out of that stock of rural images which are reposited in the memory, is, in fact, the substance of all those luscious and luxuriant paintings, which poetry hath ever been able to *feign*. For what more is there in the *Elysiums*, the *Arcadias*, the *Edens*, of ancient and modern fame? And the common *object* of all these pictures being continually present to the eye, what way is there of avoiding the most exact agreement of representation in them? Or how

from any *similarity* in the materials, of which they are formed, shall we infer an *imitation?*

This agreeable scenery is, for an obvious reason, the most frequent object of description. Though sometimes it chuses to itself a dark and sombrous imagery; which nature, again, holds out to imitation; or fancy, which hath a wondrous quickness and facility in opposing its ideas, readily suggests. We have an instance in the picture of that *horrid and detested vale* which Tamora describes in TITUS ANDRONICUS. It is a perfect contrast to Aelian's, and may be called an *Anti-tempe.* Or, to see this opposition of images in the strongest light, the reader may turn to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* of Milton; where he hath artfully made, throughout the two poems, the same kind of subjects excite the two passions of *mirth* and *melancholy.*

When the reader is got into this train, he will easily extend the same observation to other instances of *natural description;* and can hardly avoid, after a few trials, coming to this short conclusion, "that of all the various deli-"neations in the poets, of the HEAVENS, in "their vicissitude of times and seasons; of "the EARTH, in its diversity of *mountains,*

" *valleys, promontories,* &c. of the SEA, under
" its several aspects of *turbulence,* or *serenity;*
" of the *make* and *structure* of ANIMALS, &c.
" it can rarely be affirmed, that they are *co-*
" *pies* of one another, but rather the genuine
" products of the same creating fancy, ope-
" rating uniformly in them all."

Yet, notwithstanding this *identity* of the subject-matter in natural description, there is room enough for true Genius to shew itself. To omit other considerations for the present, it will more especially appear in the *manner of Representation;* by which is not meant the language of the poet, but simply the *form* under which he chuses to present his imagery to the fancy. The reader will excuse my adding a word on so curious a subject, which he will readily apprehend from the following instance.

Descriptions of the *morning* are very frequent in the poets. But this appearance is known by so many attending circumstances, that there will be room for a considerable variety in the pictures of it. It may be described by those *stains of light,* which streak and diversify the clouds; by the peculiar *colour of the dawn;* by its *irradiations* on the *sea,* or

earth; on some peculiar objects, as *trees, hills, rivers,* &c. A difference also will arise from the *situation,* in which we suppose ourselves; if on the *sea shore,* this *harbinger of day* will seem to break forth from the *ocean;* if on the *land,* from the extremity of a large plain, terminated, it may be, by some remarkable object, as a *grove, mountain,* &c. There are many other *differences,* of which the same precise *number* will scarcely offer itself to two poets; or not the *same individual* circumstances; or not *disposed* in the same manner. But let the same identical circumstance, suppose the *breaking or first appearance of the dawn,* be taken by different writers, and we may still expect a considerable diversity in their *representation* of it. What we may allow to all poets, is, that they will *personate* the morning. And though this idea of it is *metaphorical,* and so belongs to another place, as respecting the *manner* of imitation only; yet, when once considered under this *figure,* the *drawing* of it comes as directly within the province of *description,* as the real, *literal* circumstances themselves. Now in descriptions of the morning under this idea of a *person,* the very same *attitude,* which is made analogous to the *circumstance* before specified, and is to suggest it, will, as I said,

be represented by different writers very differently. *Homer*, to express *the rise or appearance of this person*, speaks of her *as shooting forth from the ocean*:

——— ΑΙΨ ΩΚΕΑΝΟΙΟ ΡΟΛΩΝ
ΩΡΝΥΘ.

Virgil, as rising from the rocks of Ida.

Jamque jugis summae surgebat Lucifer Idae,
Ducebatque diem.

Shakespear hath closed a fine description of the morning with the same *image*, but expressed in a very different manner.

——— *Look what streaks*
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are put out: and JOCUND DAY
STANDS TIPTOE ON THE MISTY MOUNTAINS TOP.

The reader, no doubt, pronounces on first sight, this description to be *original*. But why? There is no part of it, which may not be traced in other poets. The *staining of the clouds*, and *putting out the stars*, are circumstances, that are almost constantly taken notice of in representations of the morning. And the last *image*, which strikes most, is not

essentially different from that of Virgil and Homer. It would express the *attitude* of a person impatient, and in act to make his appearance. And this is, plainly, the *image* suggested by the other two. But the difference lies here. Homer's *expression* of this *impatience* is *general*, ΩΡΝΥΘ. So is Virgil's, and, as the occasion required, with less energy, SURGEBAT. Shakespear's is *particular:* that impatience is set before us, and pictured to the eye in the circumstance of *standing tiptoe;* the attitude of a winged messenger, in act to shoot away on his errand with eagerness and precipitation. Which is a beauty of the same kind with that Aristotle so much admired in the ΡΟΔΟΔΑΚΤΥΛΟΣ of Homer. "This "image, says he, is peculiar and singularly "proper to set the object before our eyes. "Had the poet said ΦΟΙΝΙΚΟΔΑΚΤΥΛΟΣ, "the colour had been signified too *generally*, "and still worse by ΕΡΥΘΡΟΔΑΚΤΥΛΟΣ. "ΡΟΔΟΔΑΚΤΥΛΟΣ gives the precise idea, "which was wanting[f]."

This, it must be owned, is one of the surest characteristics of real genius. And if we find it generally in a writer, we may almost venture

[f] ARIST. RHET. lib. iii. c. xi.

to esteem him *original* without further scruple. For the shapes and appearances of things are apprehended, only in the gross, by dull minds. They think the *see*, but it is as through a mist, where if they catch but a faint glimpse of the form before them, it is well. More one is not to look for from their clouded imaginations. And what they thus imperfectly discern, it is not possible for them to delineate very distinctly. Whereas every object stands forth in bright sunshine to the view of the true poet. Every minute mark and lineament of the contemplated form leaves a corresponding trace on his fancy. And having these bright and determinate conceptions of things in his own mind, he finds it no difficulty to convey the liveliest ideas of them to others. This is what we call *painting* in poetry; by which not only the general natures of things are described, and their more obvious appearances shadowed forth; but every single *property* marked, and the poet's own image set in distinct *relief* before the view of his reader.

If this glow of imagery, resulting from clear and bright perceptions in the poet, be not a certain character of *genius*, it will be difficult, I believe, to say what is: I mean so far as descriptive poetry, which we are now considering,

is concerned. The same *general* appearances must be copied by all poets; the same *particular* circumstances will frequently occur to all. But to give life and colour to the selected circumstance, and imprint it on the imagination with distinctness and vivacity, this is the proper office of true genius. An ordinary writer may, by dint of industry, and a careful study of the best models, sometimes succeed in this work of *painting*; that is, having stolen a ray of celestial matter, he may now and then direct it so happily, as to animate and enkindle his own earthly lump; but to succeed constantly in this art of description, to be able, on all occasions, to exhibit what the Greek Rhetoricians call ΦΑΝΤΑΣΙΑΝ; which is, as Longinus well expresses it, when "the "poet, from his own vivid and enthusiastic "conception, seems to have the object, he de-"scribes, in actual view, and presents it, al-"most, to the eyes of the readers;" this can be accomplished by nothing less, than the genuine plastic powers of original creation.

2. If from this vast theatre of *sensible and extraneous* beauty, the poet turn his attention

s Ὅταν ἃ λέγῃς, ὑπ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους βλέπειν δοκῇς, καὶ ὑπ' ὄψιν τιθῇς ἀκούσαις. [ΠΕΡ. ΥΨ. § XV.]

to what passes *within*, he immediately discovers a new world, invisible indeed and intellectual; but which is equally capable of being represented to the internal sense of others. This arises from that *similarity of mind*, if I may so speak, which, like that of outward *form* and *make*, by the wise provision of nature, runs through the whole species. We are all furnished with the same original *properties and affections*, as with the same stock of *perceptions and ideas*; whence it is, that our intimate consciousness of what we carry about in ourselves, becomes, as it were, the interpreter of the poet's thought; and makes us readily enter into all his descriptions of the human nature. These descriptions are of two kinds; either 1. such as express that tumult and disorder of the mind, which we feel in ourselves from the disturbance of any natural affection: or, 2. that more quiet state, which gives birth to calmer sentiments and reflexions. The *former* division takes in all the workings of PASSION. The *latter*, comprehends our MANNERS and SENTIMENTS. Both are equally the objects of poetry; and of poetry only, which triumphs without a rival, in this most sublime and interesting of all the modes of *imitation*. Painting, we know, can express the *material universe*; and, as will be seen

hereafter, can evidence the internal movements of the soul by *sensible marks and symbols*; but it is poetry alone, which delineates the mind itself, and opens the recesses of the heart to us.

EFFERT ANIMI MOTUS INTERPRETE LINGUA.

Now the poet, as I said, in addressing himself to this province of his art, hath only to consult with his own conscious reflexion. Whatever be the situation of the persons, whom he would make known to us, let him but take counsel of his own heart[h], and it will very faithfully suggest the fittest and most natural expressions of their character. No man can describe of others further than he hath *felt* himself. And what he hath thus known from his own *feeling* is so consonant to the experience of all others, that his description must needs be *true*; that is, be the very same, which a careful attention to such experience must have dictated to every other. So that, instead of asking one's self

[h] What is here said of *poetical fiction*, Quinctilian hath applied to *oratorial narration*; the credibility of which will depend on the observance of this rule. *Credibilis erit narratio antè omnia, si priùs consuluerimus nostrum* ANIMUM, *nequid naturae dicamus adversum.* [L. iv. 2.]

(as an admired ancient advised to do) on any attempt to excel in composition, "how this or "that celebrated author would have written on "the occasion;" the surer way, perhaps, is to inquire of ourselves "how we have *felt* or "*thought* in such a conjuncture, what *sensa-* "*tions* or *reflexions* the like circumstances "have actually excited in us." For the answer to these queries will undoubtedly set us in the direct road of nature and common sense. And, whatever is thus taken from the *life*, will, we may be sure, affect other minds, in proportion to the vigour of our conception and expression of it. In sum,

To catch the manners living, as they rise,

I mean, from our own internal frame and constitution, is the sole way of writing naturally and justly of human life. And every such description of *ourselves* (the great exemplar of *moral imitation)* will be as unavoidably similar to any description copied on the like occasion, by other poets; as pictures of the *natural world* by different hands, are, and must be, to each other, as being all derived from the archetype of one common original.

1. Let us take some master-piece of a great poet, most famed for his original invention, in

which he has successfully revealed the secret internal workings of any PASSION. What does he make known of these mysterious powers, but what he *feels?* And whence comes the impression, his description makes on others, but from its agreement to their *feelings*[i]*?* To instance, in the expression of *grief on the murder of children, relations, friends, &c.* a *passion,* which poetry hath ever taken a fond pleasure to paint in all its distresses, and which our common nature obliges all readers to enter into with an exquisite sensibility. What are the tender touches which most affect us on these occasions? Are they not such as these: *complaints of untimely death: of unnatural cruelty in the murderer: imprecations of vengeance: weariness and contempt of life: expostulations with heaven: fond recollections*

[i] So the great philosopher, ὁ γὰρ περὶ ἑνὸς συμβαίνει παθεῖν ψυχὰς ἰσχυρῶς, τοῦτο ἐν πάσαις ὑπάρχει. τῷ δὲ ἧττον διαφέρει, καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον. ΠΟΛΙΤ. Θ. Whence our Hobbes seems to have taken his aphorism, which he makes the corner-stone of his philosophy. "That for the similitude "of the thoughts and passions of one man to the thoughts "and passions of another, whosoever looketh into him-"self, and considereth what he doth, when he does *think,* "*opine, reason, hope, fear,* &c. and upon what grounds; "he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts "and passions of all other men, upon the like occasions."

LEVIATHAN, *Introd. p. 2. fol. London.* 1651.

of the virtues and good qualities of the deceased; and of the different expectations, raised by them? These were the dictates of nature to the *father of poets*, when he had to draw the distresses of *Priam's* family sorrowing for the death of Hector. Yet nothing, it seems, but *servile imitation* could supply his sons, the Greek and Roman poets in after-times, with such pathetic lamentations. It may be so. They were all nourished by his streams. But what shall we say of one, who assuredly never drank at his fountains?

—My heart will burst, and if I speak—
And I will speak, that so my heart may burst.
Butchers and villains, bloody cannibals,
How sweet a plant have ye untimely cropt!
You have no children; butchers, if you had,
The thought of them would have stirr'd up remorse.

The reader, also, may consult that wonderful scene, in which MACDUFF laments the murder of his wife and children. [MACBETH.]

2. It is not different with the MANNERS; I mean those sentiments, which mark and distinguish *characters*. These result immediately from the suggestions of *nature;* which

is so uniform in her workings, and offers herself so openly to common inspection, that nothing but a perverse and studied affectation can frequently hinder the exactest similarity of representation in different writers. This is so true, that, from knowing the *general character*, intended to be kept up, we can guess, beforehand, how a person will act, or what sentiments he will entertain, on any occasion. And the critic even ventures to prescribe, by the authority of rule, the particular properties and attributes, required to sustain it. And no wonder. Every man, as he can make himself the *subject* of all passions, so he becomes, in a manner, the *aggregate* of all *characters*. Nature may have inclined him most powerfully to one set of *manners;* just as one *passion* is, always, predominant in him. But he finds in himself the seeds of all others. This consciousness, as before, furnishes the characteristic sentiments, which constitute the *manners*. And it were full as strange for two poets, who had taken in hand such a character, as that of Achilles, to differ materially in their expression of it; as for two painters, drawing from the same object, to avoid a striking conformity in the *design* and attitude of their pictures.

Those who are fond of hunting after parallels, might, I doubt not, with great ease, confront almost every sentiment, which, in the Greek tragedians, is made expressive of particular *characters*, with similar passages in other poets; more especially (for I must often refer to his authority) in the various living pourtraitures of *Shakespear*. Yet he, who after taking this learned pains, should chuse to urge such parallels, when found, for proofs of his *imitation of the ancients*, would only run the hazard of being reputed, by men of sense, as poor a critic of human nature, as of his author.

I say this with confidence, because I say it on a great authority. "Tout est dit (says "an exquisite writer on the subject of *man-* "*ners)* et l'on vient trop tard depuis plus de "sept mille ans qu'il y a des hommes, et qui "pensent. Sur ce qui concerne les MOEURS, "le plus beau et le meilleur est enlevé; l'on ne "fait que glaner après les anciens, & les "habiles d'entre les modernes[k]."

Thus far indeed, the case is almost too plain to be disputed. Strong *affections*, and consti-

[k] M. DE LA BRUYERE, Tom. 1. p. 91. Amst. 1701.

tutional *characters*, will be allowed to act powerfully and steadily upon us. The violence and rapidity of their movements render all disguise impossible. And we find ourselves determined, by a kind of necessity, to *think and speak*, in given circumstances, after much the same manner. But what shall we say of our cooler reasonings; the *sentiments*, which the mind, at pleasure, revolves, and applies, as it sees fit, to various occasions? "Fancy and "humour, it will be thought, have so great an "influence in directing these operations of our "mental faculties, as to make it altogether "incredible, that any remarkable coincidence "of sentiment, in different persons, should "result from them."

To think of reducing the thoughts of man, which are "*more than the sands, and wider than the ocean*," into classes, were, perhaps, a wild attempt. Yet the most considerable of those, which enter into works of poetry (besides such as result from fixed *characters* or predominant *passions)* may be included in the division of 1. *Religious*, 2. *Moral*, and 3. *Oeconomical* sentiments; understanding by this *last* (for I know of no fitter term to express my meaning) all those *reasonings*, which take their rise from *particular conjunctures of*

ordinary life, and are any way relative to our conduct in it.

1. The apprehension of some invisible power, as superintending the universe, tho' not *connate* with the mind, yet, from the experience of all ages, is found inseparable from the first and rudest exertions of its powers. And the several reflexions, which religion derives from this *idea*, are altogether as necessary. It is easy to conceive, how unavoidably, almost, the mind awakened by certain conjunctures of *distress*, and working on the ground of this original *impression*, turns itself to awful views of deity, and seeks relief in those soothing contemplations of Providence, which we find so frequent in the *epic* and *tragic* poets. And whoever shall give himself the trouble of examining those noble *hymns*, which the *lyric* muse, in her gravest humours, chaunted to the popular gods of paganism, will hardly find a single trace of a devotional sentiment, which hath not been common, at all times, to all *religionists*. Their *power*, and sovereign *disposal of all events*; their *care of the good*, and *aversion to the wicked*; the blessings, they derive on their *worshippers*, and the terrors, they infix in the breasts of the *profane*; they are the usual topics of their

meditations; the solemn sentiments, that consecrate these addresses to their local, gentilitial deities. In listening to these divine strains every one *feels*, from his own consciousness, how necessary such reflexions are to human nature; more particularly, when to the simple apprehension of *deity*, a warm *fancy* and strong *affections* join their combined powers, to push the mind forward into enthusiastic raptures. All the faculties of the soul being then upon the stretch, natural ability holds the place, and, in some sort, doth the office, of divine suggestion. And, bating the impure mixture of their fond and senseless *traditions*, one is not surprized to find a strong resemblance, oftentimes, in point of *sentiment*, betwixt these pagan odes, and the genuine inspirations of Heaven. Let not the reader be scandalized at this bold comparison. It affirms no more, than what the gravest authors have frequently shewn, a manifest analogy between the sacred and prophane poets; and which supposes only, that Heaven, when it infuses its own light into the breasts of men, doth not extinguish *that* which nature and reason had before kindled up in them. It follows, that either *succeeding* poets are not necessarily to be accused of stealing their religious sentiments from their elder brethren, or that ORPHEUS,

HOMER, and CALLIMACHUS may be as reasonably charged with plundering the sacred treasures of DAVID, and the other Hebrew prophets.

It is much the same with the *illusions* of *corrupt* religion. The *fauns and nymphs* of the ancients, holding their residence in shadowy groves or caverns, and the frightful spectres of their *Larvae:* to which we may oppose the modern visions of *fairies;* and of *ghosts,* gliding through church-yards, and haunting sepulchres; together with the vast train of gloomy reflexions, which so naturally wait upon them, are, as well as the juster notions of divinity, the genuine offspring of the same *common apprehensions.* Reason, when misled by superstition, takes a *certain route,* and keeps as steadily in it, as when conducted by a sound and sober piety. There needs only a previous conception of unseen *intelligence* for the ground-work; and the timidity of human nature, amidst the nameless terrors, which are everywhere presenting themselves to the suspicious eye of ignorance, easily builds upon it the entire fabrick of superstitious thinking. With the poets all this goes under the common name of RELIGION. For they are concerned only to represent the opinions and

conclusions, to which the *idea* of divinity leads. And these, we now see, they derive from their own *experience*, or the received *theology* of the times, of which they write. *Religious sentiments* being, then, universally, either the obvious deductions of human reason, in the easiest exercise of its powers, or the plain matter of simple observation, regarding what passes before us in real life, how can they but be the *same* in different writers, though perfectly *original*, and holding no correspondence with each other?

2. And the same is true of our *moral*, as *religious* sentiments. Whole volumes, indeed, have been written to shew, that all our commonest notices of *right* and *wrong* have been traduced from ancient tradition, founded on express supernatural communication. With writers of this turn the *gnomae* of paganism, even the slightest moral sentiments of the most original ancients, spring from this source. If any exception were allowed, one should suppose it would be in favour of the *father of poetry*, whose writings all have agreed to set up as the very prodigy of human invention. And yet a very learned Professor[1] (to pass over

[1] Dr. Duport.

many slighter Essays) hath compiled a large work of Homer's moral *parallelisms;* that is, ethic sentences, confronted with similar ones out of sacred writ. The correspondency, it seems, appeared so striking to this learned person, that he was in doubt, if this great original thinker had not drawn from the fountains of *Siloam,* instead of *Castalis.* Whereas the whole, which these studied collections prove to plain sense, perverted by no bias of false zeal or religious prepossession, is, that reason, or provident nature, has incribed the same legible characters of *moral* truth on all minds; and that the beauties of the *moral,* as *natural* world lie open to the view of all observers. This, if it were not too plain to need insisting upon, might be further shewn from the *similarity,* which hath constantly been observed in the *law* and *moral* of all states and countries; as well the uninformed, and far distant regions of barbarism, as those happier climates, on which, from the neighbourhood of their situation, and the curiosity of inquiry, some beams of this celestial light may be thought to have glanced.

3. For what concerns the class of *oeconomical sentiments;* or such prudential conclu-

sions, as offer themselves on certain conjunctures of ordinary life, these, it is plain, depending very much on the free exercise of our reasoning powers, will be more variable and uncertain, than any other. When the mind is at leisure to cast about and amuse itself with reflexions, which no *characteristic quality* dictates, or *affection* extorts, and which spring from no preconceived system of *moral or religious* opinions, a greater latitude of thinking is allowed; and consequently any remarkable correspondency of *sentiment* affords more room for suspicion of *imitation*. Yet, in any supposed combination of circumstances, one train of thought is, generally, most obvious, and occurs soonest to the understanding; and, it being the office of poetry to present the most *natural* appearances, one cannot be much surprized to find a frequent coincidence of reflexion even here. The first page one opens in any writer will furnish examples. The duke in *Measure for Measure*, upon hearing some petty slanders thrown out against himself, falls into this trite reflexion:

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape: back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes.

Friar Lawrence, in *Romeo* and *Juliet*, observing the excessive raptures of Romeo on his marriage, gives way to a sentiment, naturally suggested by this circumstance:

These violent delights have violent ends,
And in their triumph die.

Now what is it, in prejudice to the originality of these places, to alledge a hundred or a thousand passages (for so many it were, perhaps, not impossible to accumulate) analogous to them in the ancient or modern poets? Could any reasonable critic mistake these genuine workings of the mind for instances of *imitation?*

In *Cymbeline*, the obsequies of Imogen are celebrated with a song of triumph over the evils of human life, from which death delivers us:

Fear no more the heat o' th' sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages, &c.

What a temptation this for the parallelist to shew his reading! yet his incomparable editor observes slightly upon it: "This is the "topic of consolation, that nature dictates to "all men on these occasions. The same

"farewell we have over the dead body in "Lucian; ΤΕΚΝΟΝ ΑΘΛΙΟΝ, ΟΥΚΕΤΙ "ΔΙΨΗΣΕΙΣ, ΟΥΚΕΤΙ ΠΕΙΝΗΣΕΙΣ, &c."

When Valentine in the *Twelfth-night* reports the inconquerable grief of Olivia for the loss of a brother, the duke observes upon it,

O! she that hath a heart of that fine frame
To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
Hath killed the flock of all affections else
That live in her?

'Tis strange, the critics have never accused the poet of stealing this sentiment from Terence, who makes Simo in the *Andrian* reason on his son's concern for Chrysis in the same manner:

Nonnunquam conlacrumabat: placuit tum id mihi.
Sic cogitabam: hic parvae consuetudinis
Causâ hujus mortem tam fert familiariter:
Quid si ipse amásset? Quid mihi hic faciet patri?

It were easy to multiply examples, but I spare the reader. Though nothing may seem, at first sight, more inconstant, variable, and

capricious, than the *thought* of man, yet he will easily collect, that *character*, *passion*, *system*, or *circumstance* can, each in its turn, by a secret yet sure influence, bind its extravagant starts and sallies; and effect, at length, as necessary a conformity in the representation of these *internal movements*, as of the visible phaenomena of the *natural world*. A poor impoverished spirit, who has no sources of invention in himself, may be tempted to relieve his wants at the expence of his wealthier neighbour. But the suspicion, of *real ability*, is childish. Common sense directs us, for the most part, to regard *resemblances* in great writers, not as the pilferings, or frugal acquisitions of needy *art*, but as the honest fruits of genius, the free and liberal bounties of unenvying *nature*.

III. Having learned, from our own conscious reflexion, the secret operations of *reason*, *character*, and *passion*, it now remains to contemplate their *effects in visible appearances*. For nature is not more regular and consistent with herself in touching the fine and hidden springs of humanity, than in ordering the outward and grosser movements. The thoughts and affections of men paint

themselves on the *countenance;* stand forth in *airs* and *attitudes;* and declare themselves in all the diversities of human *action.* This is a new field for mimic genius to range in; a great and glorious one, and which affords the noblest and most interesting objects of *imitation.* For the external forms themselves are grateful to the *fancy,* and, as being expressive of *design,* warm and agitate the *heart* with passion. Hence it is, that narrative poetry, which draws mankind under every *apparent consequence and effect* of passion, inchants the mind. And even the dramatic, we know, is cool and lifeless, and loses half its efficacy, without *action.* This, too, is the province of *picture, statuary,* and all arts, which inform by mute signs. Nay, the mute arts may be styled, almost without a figure, in this class of *imitation,* the most eloquent. For what words can express *airs and attitudes,* like the pencil? Or, when the genius of the artists is equal, who can doubt of giving the preference to that representation, which, striking on the sight, grows almost into reality, and is hardly considered by the inraptured thought, as *fiction?* When *passion* is to be made known by outward *act,* Homer himself yields the palm to *Raphael.*

But our business is with the *poets*. And, in reviewing this their largest and most favoured stock of *materials*, can we do better than contemplate them in the very order, in which we before disposed the *workings* of the mind itself, the *causes* of these appearances?

1. To begin with the *affections*. They have their rise, as was observed, from the very *constitution* of human nature, when placed in given circumstances, and acted upon by certain occurrences. The perceptions of these inward commotions are uniformly the same, in all; and draw along with them the same, or similar *sentiments and reflexions*. Hence the appeal is made to every one's own *consciousness*, which declares the truth or falshood of the *imitation*. When these *commotions* are produced and made objective to sense by *visible signs*, is *observation* a more fallible guide, than *consciousness*? Or, doth experience attest these *signs* to be less similar and uniform, than their *occasions*? By no means. Take a man under the impression of *joy*, *fear*, *grief*, or any other of the stronger affections; and see, if a peculiar conformation of feature, some certain stretch of muscle, or contortion of limb, will not necessarily follow, as the clear and undoubted index of his condition.

Our natural curiosity is ever awake and attentive to these *changes*. And poetry sets herself at work, with eagerness, to catch and transcribe their various *appearances*. No correspondency of representation, then, needs surprize us; nor any the exactest *resemblance* be thought strange, where the *object* is equally present to all persons. For it must be remarked of the *visible effects* of MIND, as, before, of the *phaenomena* of the *material world*, that they are, simply, the objects of *observation*. So that what was concluded of *these*, will hold also of the *others*; with this difference, that the *effects of internal movements* do not present themselves so *constantly* to the eye, nor with that *uniformity* of appearance, as *permanent, external existencies*. We cannot survey them at *pleasure*, but as occasion offers: and we, further, find them diversified by the *character*, or disguised, in some degree, by the *artifice*, of the persons, in whom we observe them. But all the consequence is, that, to succeed in this work of painting the *signatures of internal affection*, requires a larger experience, or quicker penetration, than copying after *still life*. Where the proper qualifications are possessed, and especially in describing the *marks* of vigorous affections, different writers cannot be supposed to vary

more considerably, in *this* province of *imitation*, than in the *other*. Our trouble therefore, on this head, may seem to be at an end. Yet it will be expected, that so general a conclusion be inforced by some *illustrations*.

The passion of LOVE is one of those affections, which bear great sway in the human nature. Its *workings* are violent. And its *effects* on the person, possessed by it, and in the train of events, to which it gives occasion, conspicuous to all observers. The power of this commanding affection hath triumphed at all times. It hath given birth to some of the greatest and most signal transactions in *history*; and hath furnished the most inchanting scenes of *fiction*. Poetry hath ever lived by it. The modern muse hath hardly any existence without it. Let us ask, then, of this *tyrant passion*, whether its operations are not too familiar to *sense*, its *effects* too visible to the *eye*, to make it necessary for the poet to go beyond himself, and the sphere of his own observation, for the *original* of his descriptions of it.

To prevent all cavil, let it be allowed, that the *signs* of this passion, I mean, the visible effects in which it shews itself, are various and

almost infinite. It is reproached, above all others, with the names of *capricious, fantastic, and unreasonable.* No wonder then, if it assume an endless variety of forms, and seem impatient, as it were, of any certain shape or posture. Yet this Proteus of a passion may be fixed by the magic hand of the poet. Though it can *occasionally* take *all,* yet it delights to be seen in *some* shapes, more than others. Some of its *effects* are known and obvious, and are perpetually recurring to observation. And these are ever fittest to the ends of poetry; every man pronouncing of such representations from his proper experience, that they are from *nature.* Nay its very irregularities may be reduced to rule. There is not, in antiquity, a truer picture of this fond and froward passion, than is given us in the person of Terence's *Phaedria* from Menander. *Horace* and *Persius,* when they set themselves, on purpose, to expose and exaggerate its follies, could imagine nothing beyond it. Yet we have much the same inconsistent character in JULIA in *The two Gentlemen of Verona.*

Shall it be now said, that *Shakespear* copied from Terence, as Terence from Menander?

Or is it not as plain to common sense, that the English poet is *original*, as that the *Latin* poet was an *imitator*?

Shakespear, on another occasion, describes the various, external symptoms of this extravagant affection. Amongst others, he insists, there is no surer sign of being in love, "*than* "*when every thing about you demonstrates a* "*careless desolation.*" [*As you like it.* A. iii. Sc. 8.] Suppose now the poet to have taken in hand the story of a neglected, abandoned lover; for instance of Ariadne; a story, which ancient poetry took a pleasure to relate, and which hath been touched with infinite grace by the tender, passionate muse of Catullus and Ovid. Suppose him to give a pourtrait of her *passion* in that distressful moment when, "*from the naked beach, she views the* "*parting sail of Theseus.*" This was a time for all the signs of *desolation* to shew themselves. And could we doubt of his describing those *very signs*, which nature's self dictated, long ago, to Catullus?

Non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram,
Non contexta levi velatum pectus amictu,
Non tereti strophio luctantes vincta papillas;
Omnia quae toto delapsa è corpore passim
Ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.

But there is a higher instance in view. The humanity and easy elegance of the two Latin poets, just mentioned, joined to an unaffected *naivetè* of expression, were, perhaps, most proper to describe the petulancies, the caprices, the softnesses of this passion in common life. To paint its tragic and more awful distresses, to melt the soul into all the sympathies of sorrow, is the peculiar character of Virgil's poetry. His talents were, indeed, universal. But, I think, we may give it for the characteristic of his muse, that she was, beyond all others, possessed of a sovereign power of touching the tender passions. Euripides' self, whose genius was most resembling to his, of all the ancients, holds, perhaps, but the second place in this praise.

A poet, thus accomplished, would omit, we may be sure, no occasion of yielding to his natural bias of recording the distresses of *love*. He discovered his talent, as well as inclination, very early, in the *Bucolics;* and even, where one should least expect it, in his *Georgics*. But the fairest opportunity offered in his great design of the *Aeneis*. Here, one should suppose, the whole bent of his genius would exert itself. And we are not disappointed. I speak not of that succession of *sentiments, reflexions,*

and expostulations, which flow, as in a continued stream of grief, from the first discovery of her heart to her sister, to her last frantic and inflamed resentments. These belong to the former article of *internal movements:* and need not be considered. My concern at present, is with those *visible, external indications,* the sensible marks and signatures (as expressed in *look, air,* and *action)* of this tormenting frenzy. The history of these, as related in the narrative part of Dido's adventure, would comprehend every natural *situation* of a person, under *love's* distractions. And it were no unpleasing amusement to follow and contemplate her, in a series of pictures, from her first attitude, of *hanging on the mouth of Aeneas,* through all the gradual excesses of her rage, to the concluding fatal *act of desperation.* But they are deeply imprinted on every schoolboy's memory. It need only be observed, that they are such, as almost necessarily spring up from the circumstances of her case, and which every reader, on first view, as agreeing to his own notices and observations, pronounces *natural.*

It may seem sufficient, therefore, to ascribe these pourtraitures of passion, so suitable to all our expectations, and in drawing which the

genius of the great poet so eminently excelled, to the original hand and design of Virgil. But the perverse humour of criticism, occasioned by this inveterate prejudice "of taking all *resemblances* for *thefts*," will allow no such thing. Before it will decide of this matter, every ancient writer, who but incidentally touches a love-adventure, must be sought out and brought in evidence against him. And finding that *Homer* hath his Calypso, and *Euripides* and *Apollonius* their Medea, it adjudges the entire episode to be stolen by piece-meal, and patched up out of their writings. I have a learned critic now before me, who roundly asserts, "that, but for the "Argonautics, there had been no fourth book "of the Aeneis[m]." Some traits of resemblance there are. It could not be otherwise. But all the use a candid reader, who comes to his author with the true spirit of a critic, will make of them, is to shew, "how justly the poet "copies nature, which had suggested similar "representations to his predecessors."

What is here concluded of the *softer*, cannot but hold more strongly of the *boisterous*

[m] JEREMIAS HOELSLINUS, *Prolegom. ad. Apollon. Rhodium.*

passions. These do not shelter, and conceal themselves within the man. It is particularly, of their nature, to stand forth, and shew themselves in *outward actions*. Of the more illustrious *effects* of the ruder passions the chief are *contentions and wars—regum & populorum aestus*; which, by reason of the grandeur of the subject, and its important consequences, so fitted to strike the thought, and fire the affections of the reader, poetry, I mean the highest and sublimest species of it, chuses principally to describe. In the conduct of such *description*, some difference will arise from the instruments in use for annoyance of the enemy, and, in general, the state of *art military*; but the actuating passions of *rage*, *ambition*, *emulation*, *thirst of honour*, *revenge*, &c. are invariably the same, and are constantly evidenced by the same external marks or characters. The *shocks of armies*, *single combats*; *the chances and singularities of either*; *wounds*, *deaths*, *stratagems*, and the other attendants on *battle*, which furnish out the state and magnificence of the epic muse, are, all of them, *fixed, determinate objects*; which leave their impressions on the mind of the poet, in as distinct and uniform characters, as the great constituent parts of the material universe itself. He hath only to look

abroad into *life and action* for the model of all such representations. On which account we can rarely be certain, that the *picture* is not from *nature*, though an exact resemblance give to superficial and unthinking observers the suspicion of *art*.

The same reasoning extends to all the *phaenomena* of human life, which are the effects or consequences of *strong affections*, and which set mankind before us in *gestures*, *looks*, or *actions*, declarative of the inward suggestions of the heart. It can seldom be affirmed with confidence, in such cases, on the score of any similarity, that one representation *imitates* another; since an ordinary attention to the same common original, sufficiently accounts for both. The reader, if he sees fit, will apply these remarks to the *battles*, *games*, *travels*, &c. of a great poet; the supposed sterility of whose genius hath been charged with serving itself pretty freely of the copious, inexhausted stores of Homer. In sum;

Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
Gaudia, &c.

Whatever be the *actuating passion*, it cannot but be thought unfair to suspect the artist of

imitation; where nothing more is pretended than a *resemblance* in the draught of *similar effects,* which it is not possible to avoid.

2. If this be comprehended, I shall need to say the less of the MANNERS; which are not less constant in their *effects,* than the PASSIONS. When the *character* of any person hath been signified, and his situation described, it is not wonderful, that twenty different writers should hit on the same *attitudes,* or employ him in the same manner. When Mercury is sent to command the departure of Ulysses from Calypso, our previous acquaintance with the hero's character makes us expect to find him in the precise *attitude,* given to him by the poet, "sitting in solitude on the sea-shore, and "casting a wishful eye towards Ithaca." Or, when, in the Iliad, an embassy is dispatched to treat with the resentful and vindictive, but brave Achilles, nothing could be more obvious than to draw the pupil of Chiron in his tent "soothing his angry soul with his harp, and "singing

"*Th' immortal deeds of heroes and of kings.*"

It was the like attention to *nature,* which led Milton to dispose of his fallen angels after

the manner, described in the second book of *Paradise lost*.

To multiply instances, when every poet in every page is at hand to furnish them, were egregious trifling. In all cases of this sort, the *known character*, in conjunction with the *circumstances* of the person described, determines the particular *action* or *employment*, for the most part, so absolutely, that it requires some industry to mistake it. In saying which, I do not forget, what many have, perhaps, been ready to object to me long since, "that "what is *natural* is not therefore of necessity "*obvious:* All the amazing flights of Homer's "or Shakespear's fancy are found agreeable to "nature, when contemplated by the capable "reader; but who will say, that, therefore, "they must have presented themselves to the "generality of writers? The office of *judgment* "is one thing, and of *invention*, another."

Properly speaking, what we call *invention* in poetry is, in respect of the *matter* of it, simply, *observation*. And it is in the arrangement, use, and application of his *materials*, not in the investigation of them, that the exercise of the poet's genius principally consists. In the case of immediate and direct *imagery*,

which is the subject at present, nothing more is requisite, than to paint truly, what nature presents to the eye, or common sense suggests to the mind of the writer. A vivacity of thought will, indeed, be necessary to run over the several circumstances of any *appearance*, and a just discernment will be wanting, out of a number, to select such peculiar circumstances, as are most adapted to strike the imagination. It is not therefore pretended, that the same images *must* occur to all. Sluggish, unactive understandings, which seldom look abroad into living nature, or, when they do, have not curiosity or vigour enough to direct their attention to the nicer particularities of her beauties, will unavoidably overlook the commonest appearances: Or, wanting that just perception of what is *beautiful*, which we call *taste*, will as often mistake in the *choice* of those circumstances, which they may have happened to contemplate. But quick, perceptive, intelligent minds (and of such only I can be thought to speak) will hardly fail of seeing nature in the same light, and of noting the same distinct features and proportions. The superiority of Homer and Shakespear to other poets doth not lie in their discovery of *new sentiments or images*, but in the forceable

manner, in which their sublime genius taught them to convey and impress *old ones*.

And to inforce what is here said of the *familiarity* of this class of the poet's materials, one may, further, appeal to the case of the other *mimetic* arts, which have no assistance from *narration*. Certain *gestures*, *looks*, or *attitudes*, are so immediately declarative of the *internal actuating causes*, that, on the slightest view of the *picture* or *statue*, we collect the real state of the persons represented. This *figure*, we say, strongly expresses the passion of *grief; that*, of *anger; that*, of *joy;* and so of all the other affections. Or, again, when the particular *passion* is characterized, the general temper and disposition, which we call the *manners*, is clearly discernible. There is a liberal and graceful air, which discovers a fine temperature of the affections, in *one;* a close and sullen aspect, declaring a narrow contracted selfishness in *another*. In short, there is scarcely any mark or feature of the human mind, any peculiarity of disposition or *character*, which the artist does not set off and make appear at once, to the view, by some certain turn or *conformation* of the outward figure. Now this effect of his

art would be impossible, were it not, that regular and constant observation hath found such *external signs* consociated with the correspondent *internal workings*. A *heaven overhung with clouds*, the *tossing of waves*, and *intermingled flashes of lightning* are not surer indications of a *storm*, than the *gloomy face, distorted limb*, and *indignant eye* are of the outrage of conflicting *passion*. The simplest spectator is capable of observing this. And the artist deceives himself, or would reflect a false honour on his art, who suspects there is any mystery in making such discoveries.

It is true, some great painters have thought it convenient to explain the design of their works by *inscriptions*. We find this expedient to have been practised of old by Polygnotus, as may be gathered from the description given us, of two of his pictures by Pausanias; and the same thing is observable of some of the best modern masters. But their intention was only to signify the names of the principal persons, and to declare the general scope of their pictures. And so far this usage may not be amiss in large compositions, and especially on new or uncommon subjects. But should an artist borrow the assistance of words to tell

us the meaning of *airs and attitudes*, and to interpret to us the *expression* of each figure, such a piece of intelligence must needs be thought very impertinent; since they must be very unqualified to pass their judgment on works of this sort, who had not, from their own observation, collected the *visible signs*, usually attendant on any *character* or *passion*; and whom therefore the representation of these *signs*, would not lead to a certain knowledge of the character or passion *intended*.

Nay there is one advantage which *painting* hath, in this respect, over *narration*, and even *poetry* itself. For though poetry represent the *same* objects, the *same* sensible marks of the internal movements, as painting, yet it doth it with less *particularity and exactness*. My meaning will be understood in reflecting, that *words* can only give us, even when most expressive, the *general* image. The pencil touches its smallest and minutest *specialities*. And this will explain the reason why any remarkable correspondency of *air, feature, attitude*, &c. in two pictures, will, commonly and with good reason, convict one or both of them of *imitation*: whereas this conclusion is by no means so certain from a correspondency of description in two poems. For the odds are

prodigious against such exactness of similitude, when the slightest trace of the pencil forms a sensible difference: But poets, who do not convey ideas with the same precision and distinctness, cannot be justly liable to this imputation, even where the general image represented happens to be the same. Virgil, one would think, on a very affecting occasion, might have given the following representation of his hero,

Multa gemens largoque humectat flumine vultum;

without any suspicion of communicating with Homer, who had said, in like manner, of his,

Ἴσατο δακρυχέων, ὥϛε κρήνη μελάνυδρϕ.

But had two painters, in presenting this image, agreed in the same particularities of *posture, inclination of the head, air of the face,* &c. no one could doubt a moment, that the one was stolen from the other. Which single observation, if attended to, will greatly abate the prejudice, usually entertained on this subject. We think it incredible, amidst the infinite diversity of the poet's materials, that any two should accord in the choice of the very *same;* more especially when described with the same *circumstances.* But we forget, that

the same materials are left in common to *all* poets, and that the very *circumstances*, alledged, can be, in *words*, but very generally and imperfectly delineated.

3, Of the *calmer sentiments*, which come within the province of poetry, and, breaking forth into outward act, furnish matter to description, the most remarkable in their operations are those of *religion*. It is certain, that the principal of those rites and ceremonies, of those outward acts of homage, which have prevailed in different ages and countries, and constituted the *public religion* of mankind, had their rise in our common nature, and were the genuine product of the workings of the human mind[n]. For it is the mere illusion of this inveterate error concerning *imitation*, in general, which hath misled some great names to imagine them traductive from each other. But the occasion does not require us to take the matter so deep. The office of poetry, in describing the solemnity of her religious ritual, is to look no farther, than the established modes of the age and country, whose manners it would represent. If these should be the same at different times in two religions, or the

[n] Div. Leg. vol. ii. par. 1. p. 355. ed. 1741.

religion itself continue unchanged, it necessarily follows, that the representations of them by different writers will agree to the minutest resemblance. Not only the general *rite* or *ceremony* will be the same; but the very peculiarities of its performance, which are prescribed by rule, remain unaltered. Thus, if *religious sentiments* usually express themselves, in *all* men, by a certain *posture of the body, direction of the hands, turn of the countenance*, &c. these *signs* are uniformly and faithfully pictured in all devotional pourtraits. So again, if by the genius of any *particular* religion, to which the poet is carefully to adhere, the practice of *sacrifices, auguries, omens, lustrations*, &c. be required in its established ceremonial, the draught of this diversity of *superstitions*, and of their minutest particulars, will have a necessary place in any work, professing to delineate such religion; whatever resemblance its descriptions may be foreseen to have to those of any other.

The reader will proceed to apply these remarks, where he sees fit. For it may scarcely seem worth while to take notice of the insinuation, which a polite writer, but no very able critic, hath thrown out against the entire use of *religious description* in poetry. I say the

entire use; for so I understand him, when he says, "the *religion* of the gentiles had been "woven into the contexture of all the ancient "poetry with a very *agreeable* mixture, which "made the moderns *affect* to give that of "Christianity a place also in their poems[o]." He seems not to have conceived, that the *visible effects* of religious opinions and dispositions, constitute a principal part of what is most striking in the sublimer poetry. The *narrative species* delights in, or rather cannot subsist without, these solemn pictures of the religious ritual; and the theatre is never more moved, than when its awful scenery is exhibited in the *dramatic*. Or, if he meant this censure, of the *intervention of superior agents*, and what we call *machinery*, the observation (though it be seconded by one, whose profession should have taught him much better[p]) is not more to the purpose. For the pomp of the *epic muse* demands to be furnished with a

[o] Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE's *Works*, vol. i. p. 245. ed. 1740. fol.

[p] "*La machine du merveilleux, l'intervention d'un pou-*"*voir céleste*, la nature des episodes, tout ce qui *depend* "*de la tyrannie de la coutume*, & de cet instinct qui on "nomme goût; voilà sur quoi il y a mille opinions, & "*point de règles générales.*" M. DE VOLTAIRE, *Essaye sur la poëste Epique*, chap. i.

train of these celestial personages. Intending, as she doth, to astonish the imagination with whatever is most august within the compass of human thought, it is not possible for her to accomplish this great end, but by the ministry of supernatural intelligences, PER AMBAGES ET MINISTERIA DEORUM.

Or, the proof of these two points may be given more precisely thus: "The relation of "man to the deity, being as essential to his "nature, as that which he bears to his fellow-"citizens, *religion* becomes as necessary a "part of a serious and sublime narration of "human life, as *civil actions*. And as the "sublime nature of it requires even *virtues* "*and vices* to be personified, much more is it "necessary, that *supernatural agency* should "bear a part in it. For, whatever some *sects* "may think of religion's being a divine phi-"losophy in the mind, the *poet* must ex-"hibit man's addresses to Heaven in *cere-*"*monies*, and Heaven's intervention by *visible* "*agency*."

So that the intermixture of religion, in every point of view, is not only *agreeable*, but necessary to the very genius of, at least, the highest class of poetry. Ancients and moderns

might therefore be led to the display of this *sacred scenery*, without *affectation*. And for what concerns *Christian poets*, in particular, we see from an instance at home (whatever may be the success of some Italians, whom he appears to have had in his eye) that, where the subject is proper to receive it, it can appear with as much *grace*, as in the *poets of paganism*. It may be concluded then, universally, that *religion* is the proper object of poetry, which wants no prompter of a preceding model to give it an introduction; and that the *forms*, under which it presents itself, are too manifest and glaring to observation, to escape any writer.

The case is somewhat different with what I call the *moral and oeconomical sentiments*. These operate indeed *within*, and by their busy and active powers administer abundant matter to poetic description, which *alone* is equal to these *unseen workings*. For their actings on the body are too feeble to produce any visible alteration of the outward form. Their fine and delicate movements are to be apprehended only and surveyed by conscious attentive reflexion. They are not, usually, of force enough to wield the machine of man; to discompose his frame, or distort his feature: and

so rarely come to be susceptible of *picture* or *representation.* One may compare the subtle operations of these *sentiments* on the human form, to the gentle breathing of the air on the face of nature. Its soft aspirations may be perceived; its nimble and delicate spirit may diffuse itself through *woods* and *fields*, and its pervading influence cherish and invigorate all *animal* or *vegetative being*. Yet no external signs evidence its *effects* to sense. It acts invisibly, and therefore no power of imitation can give it *form* and *colouring*. Its impulses must, at least, have a certain degree of strength: it must *wave* the grass, *incline* trees, and *scatter* leaves, before the painter can lay hold of it, and draw it into *description*. Just so it is with our *calmer sentiments*. They seldom stir or disorder the human frame. They spring up casually, and as circumstances concur, within us; but, as it were, sink and die away again, like passing gales, without leaving any impress or mark of violence behind them. In short, when they do not grow out of *fixed characters*, or are prompted by *passion*, they do not, I believe, ever make themselves visible.

And this observation reaches as well to *event and action* in life, as to the *corporal figure* of the person in whom they operate. The senti-

ments, here spoken of, however naturally or even necessarily they may occur to the mind on certain occasions, yet have seldom or never any immediate effect on consequent action. And the reason is, that we do not proceed to *act* on the sole conclusions of the understanding; unless such *conclusions*, by frequent meditation, or the co-operating influence of some affection, excite a ferment in the mind, and impel the will by *passion*. Such moral aphorisms as these, "*that friendship is the* "*medicine of life*," and, "*that our country*, "*as including all other interests, claims our* "*first regard*," though likely to obtrude themselves upon us on a thousand occasions, yet would never have urged Achilles to such a train of action, as makes the striking part of the Iliad; or Ulysses, to that which runs through the intire Odyssey; if a strong, instinctive affection in both had not conspired to produce it. When *produced* therefore, they are to be considered as the genuine consequences, not of these *moral sentiments*, taken simply by themselves, but of strong benevolence of soul, implanted by *nature*, and strengthened by *habit*. They are properly then, the result of the *manners*, or *passions*, which have been already contemplated. Our sentiments, merely as such, terminate in

themselves, and furnish no external apparent matter to *description.*

The same conclusion would, it must be owned, hold of our *religious,* as *moral* sentiments, were we to regard them only in this view of *dispassionate and cool reflexions.* For such reflexions produce no change of *feature,* no alteration in the *form or countenance,* nor are they necessarily followed by any *sensible* demonstration of their power in outward *action.* But then it usually happens (which sets the widest difference between the two cases) that the *one,* as respecting an *object,* whose very *idea* interests strongly, and puts all our faculties in motion, are, almost of necessity, associated with the impelling causes of *affection;* and so express themselves in legible signs and characters. Whereas the other sentiments, respecting *human nature and its necessities,* are frequently no other than a calm indifferent survey of common life, unattended with any *emotion* or inciting principle of action. Hence *religion,* inspiriting all its meditations with *enthusiasm,* generally shews itself in *outward signs;* whereas we frequently discern no traces, as necessarily attendant upon *moral.* Which *difference* is worth the noting, were it only for the sake of seeing more distinctly the vast

advantage of *poetry*, above all *other modes of imitation*. For *these*, explaining themselves by the help of *natural media*, which present a *real resemblance*, are able but imperfectly to describe *religious sentiments*; in as much as they express the *general vague disposition* only, and not the precise *sentiments themselves*. And in *moral*, they can frequently give us no *image* or representation at all. While *poetry*, which tells its meaning by *artificial signs*, conveys distinct and clear notices of this class of *moral and religious* conceptions, which afford such mighty entertainment to the human mind. But it serves to a further purpose, more immediately relative to the subject of this inquiry. For these *ethic and prudential* conclusions, being seen to produce no immediate *effect* in look, attitude, or action, we are to regard them only in their remoter and less direct consequences, as influencing, at a distance, the civil and oeconomical affairs of life.

And in this view they open a fresh field for *imitation*; not quite so striking to the spectator, perhaps, but even larger, than *that*, into which religion, with all its multiform superstitions, before led us. For to these *internal workings*, assisted and pushed forward by the wants and necessities of our nature,

which set the inventive powers on work, are ultimately to be referred that vast congeries of *political*, *civil*, *commercial*, and *mechanic* institutions, of those infinite *manufactures*, *arts*, and *exercises*, which come in to the relief or embellishment of human life. Add to these all those nameless *events* and *actions*, which, though determined by no fixed *habit*, or leading *affection*, human prudence, providing for its security or interests, in certain circumstances, naturally projects and prescribes. These are ample materials for *description*; and the greater poetry necessarily comprehends a large share of them. Yet in all delineations of this sort two things are observable, 1. That in the *latter*, which are the pure result of our reasonings concerning expediency, *common sense*, in given conjunctures, often leads to the same measures: As when *Ulysses* in Homer disguises himself, for the sake of coming at a more exact information of the state of his family; or, when *Orestes* in Sophocles does the same, to bring about the catastrophe of the *Electra*. 2. In respect of the *former* (which is of principal consideration) the established modes and practices of life being the proper and only *archetype*, experience and common observation cannot fail of pointing, with the greatest certainty, to

them. So that in the *one* case different writers *may* concur in treating the *same* matter, in the *other*, they *must*. But this last will bear a little further illustration.

The critics on Homer have remarked, with admiration, in him, the almost infinite variety of images and pictures, taken from the intire circle of *human arts*. Whatever the wit of man had invented for the service or ornament of society in manual exercises and operations is found to have a place in his writings. *Rural affairs*, in their several branches; the *mechanic*, and all the polite arts of *sculpture*, *painting*, and *architecture*, are occasionally hinted at in his poems; or, rather, their various imagery, so far as they were known and practised in those times, is fully and largely displayed. Now this, though it shew the prodigious extent of his observation and diligent curiosity, which could search through all the storehouses and magazines of *art*, for materials of description, yet is not to be placed to the score of his superior *inventive faculty*; nor infers any thing to the disadvantage of succeeding poets, whose subjects might oblige them to the same descriptions; any more than his vast acquaintance with *natural scenery*, in all its numberless appearances, implies a

want of *genius* in later imitators, who, if they ventured, at all, into this province, were constrained to give us the *same unvaried representations.*

The truth, as every one sees, is, briefly, this. The restless and inquisitive mind of man had succeeded in the discovery or improvement of the numberless arts of life. These, for the convenience of method, are considered as making a large part of those sensible external *effects*, which spring from our internal *sentiments* or *reasonings*. But, though they ultimately respect those *reasonings*, as their source, yet they, in no degree, depend on the actual exertion of them in the breast of the poet. He copies only the customs of the times, of which he writes, that is, the sensible *effects* themselves. These are permanent objects, and may, nay *must* be the *same*, whatever be the ability or genius of the *copier*. In short, taken together, they make up what, in the largest sense of the word, we may call, with the painters, *il costumè*; which though it be a real excellence scrupulously to observe, yet it requires nothing more than exact observation and historical knowledge of *facts* to do it.

And now having the various objects of *poetical imitation* before us (the greatest part of which, as appears, *must*, and the rest *may*, occur to the observation of the poet) we come to this *conclusion*, which, though it may startle the *parallelist*, there seems no method of eluding, "that of any single *image* or *sen-* "*timent*, considered separately and by itself, "it can never be affirmed certainly, hardly "with any shew of reason, merely on account "of its agreement in *subject-matter* with any "other, that it was copied from it." If there be any foundation of this inference, it must then be laid, not on the *matter*, but MANNER of imitation. But here, again, the subject branches out into various particulars; which, to be seen distinctly, will demand a new division, and require us to proceed with leisure and attention through it.

II.

The sum of the foregoing *article* is this. The *objects* of imitation, like the *materials* of human knowledge, are a common stock, which experience furnishes to all men. And it is in the *operations* of the mind upon them, that

the glory of *poetry*, as of *science*, consists. Here the genius of the *poet* hath room to shew itself; and from hence alone is the praise of *originality* to be ascertained. The fondest admirer of ancient art would never pretend that *Palladio* had copied *Vitruvius*, merely from his working with the same materials of *wood*, *stone*, or *marble*, which this great master had employed before him. But were the general *design* of these two architects the *same* in any buildings; were their choice and arrangement of the smaller *members* remarkably similar; were their works conducted in the same *style*, and their ornaments finished in the same *taste*; every one would be apt to pronounce on first sight, that the one was *borrowed* from the other. Even a correspondency in any *one* of these points might create a suspicion. For what likelihood, amidst an infinite variety of *methods*, which offer themselves, as to *each* of these particulars, that there should be found, without *design*, a signal concurrence in *any one*? 'Tis then in the *usage and disposition* of the objects of poetry, that we are to seek for proofs and evidences of plagiarism. And yet it may not be every instance of similarity, that will satisfy here. For the question recurs, "whether of "the several *forms*, of which his materials

" are susceptible, there be nothing in the na-
" ture of things, which determines the artist
" to prefer a *particular* one to all others."
For it is possible, that *general principles* may as well account for a *conformity in the manner*, as we have seen them do for an *identity of matter*, in works of imitation. And to this question nothing can be replied, till we have taken an accurate survey of this *second division* of our subject. Luckily, the allusion to architecture, just touched upon, points to the very method, in which it may be most distinctly pursued. For here too, the MANNER *of imitation*, if considered in its full extent, takes in 1. *The general plan or disposition of a poem.* 2. *The choice and application of particular subjects: and* 3. *The expression.*

1. *All poetry*, as lord Bacon admirably observes, " *nihil aliud est quam* HISTORIAE
" IMITATIO AD PLACITUM." By which is not meant, that the poet is at liberty to conduct his *imitation* absolutely in any manner he pleases, but with such deviations from the rule of history, as the *end* of poetry prescribes. This end is, universally, PLEASURE; as *that* of simple history is, INFORMATION. And from a respect to this *end*, together with some proper allowance for the diversity of the *subject-*

matter, and the *mode of imitation* (I mean whether it be in the way of *recital*, or of action) are the essential differences of poetry from mere history, and the *form or disposition* of its several *species*, derived. What these *differences* are, and what the *general plan* in the composition of *each species*, will appear from considering the *defects* of simple history in reference to the *main end*, which poetry designs.

Some of these are observed by the great person before-mentioned, which I shall want no excuse for giving in his own words.

" 1. Cum res gestae et eventus, qui verae " historiae subjiciuntur, non sint ejus ampli- " tudinis, in quâ anima humana sibi satisfa- " ciat, praesto est *poësis*, quae facta magis " heroica confingat. 2. Cum historia vera " successus rerum minime pro meritis virtutum " & scelerum, narret; corrigit eam *poësis*, & " exitus & fortunas, secundum merita, & ex " lege Nemeseos, exhibet. 3. Cum historia " vera, obviâ rerum satietate & similitudine, " animae humanae fastidio sit; reficit eam " poësis, inexpectata, & varia & vicissitudinum " plena canens.—Quare & merito etiam divi- " nitatis cujuspiam particeps videri possit; quia

" animum erigit & in sublime rapit; *rerum*
" *simulachra ad animi desideria accommo-*
" *dando, non animum rebus (quod ratio facit,*
" *& historia) submittendo*[r]."

These *advantages* chiefly respect the *narrative* poetry, and above all, the *Epos*. There are others, still more *general*, and more directly to the purpose of this inquiry. For 4. The *historian* is bound to record *a series of independent events and actions;* and so, at once, falls into two *defects*, which make him incapable of affording perfect *pleasure* to the mind. For 1. The flow of passion, produced in us by contemplating *any signal event*, is greatly checked and disturbed amidst a *variety and succession of actions*. And 2. being obliged to pass with celerity over *each* transaction (for otherwise history would be too tedious for the purpose of *information)* he has not time to draw out *single circumstances* in full light and impress them with all their force on the imagination. *Poetry* remedies these two defects. By confining the attention to *one* object only, it gives the fancy and affections fair play: and by bringing forth to view and even magnifying all the *circumstances* of

[r] De augm. Scient. lib. ii. c. 13.

that *one*, it gives to every subject its proper dignity and importance. 5. Lastly, to satisfy the human mind, there must not only be an *unity and integrity*, but a strict *connexion and continuity* of the fable or action represented. Otherwise the mind languishes, and the transition of the passions, which gives the chief pleasure, is broken and interrupted. The *historian* fails, also, in this. By proceeding in the gradual and orderly succession of *time*, the several incidents, which compose the story, are not laid close enough together to content the natural avidity of our expectations. Whilst *poetry*, neglecting this regularity of succession, and setting out in the midst of the story, gratifies our instinctive impatience, and carries the *affections* along, with the utmost rapidity, towards the *event*.

These *advantages* are common both to *narrative* and *dramatic* poetry. But the *drama*, as professing to copy *real life*, contents itself with these. The rest belong entirely to the province of *narration*.

Now the *general forms* of poetical method, as distinct from *that* of history, are the pure result of our conclusions concerning the expediency and fitness of these *means*, as conducive

to the proper *end* of poetry. Which, without more words, will inform us, how it came to pass, that the *true plan or disposition of poetical* works, was so early hit upon in *practice*, and established by exact *theories*; and may therefore satisfy us of the *necessary* resemblance and uniformity of all productions of this kind, whether their authors had, or had not, been guided by the pole-star of *example*.

So much for the *general forms* of the two greater *kinds* of poetry. If a proper allowance be made for a diversity of *subject-matter*, in either *mode* of composition, it will be easy, as I said, to account for the *particular forms* of the several subordinate species. And I the rather choose to do it in this way, and not from the peculiar *end* of each, which indeed were more philosophical, because the business is to make appear, how nature leads to the same general plan of composition in *practice*, not to establish the laws of each in the exact way of *theory*. Now in considering the matter *historically*, the diversity of *subject-matter* was doubtless *that* which first determined the writer to a different *form* of composition, tho' afterwards, a consideration of the *end*, accomplished by *each*, be requisite to deduce, with more precision of method, its distinct laws.

The *latter* is that from whence the *speculative critic* rightly estimates the character of every species; but the inventor had his direction principally from the *former*.

Let me exemplify the observation in an instance under either *mode* of imitation, and leave the rest to the reader.

1. The GEORGIC is a species of *narration*. But, as *things*, not *persons*, are its subject (from which last alone the *unity of design* and *continuity of action* arise) this circumstance absolves it from the necessity of observing any other laws, than those of clear and perspicuous disposition, and of enlivening a matter, naturally uninteresting, by *exquisite expression* and *pleasing digressions*.

2. The PASTORAL poem may be considered as a lower species of the *Drama*. But, its subject being the *humble concerns* of Shepherds, there seems no room for a tragic *Plot*; and their characters are too simple to afford materials for comic *drawing*. Their *scene* is indeed inchanting to the imagination. And, together with this, their little distresses may sooth us in a short song; or their fancies and humours may entertain us in a short Dialogue.

And that this is the proper province of the Pastoral Muse, we may see by the ill success of those who have laboured to extend it. Tasso's project was admired for a time. But we, now, understand that pastoral affairs will not admit a tragic pathos. And the continuance of the pastoral vein, through five long acts, is found insipid, or even distasteful. This poem then has returned to that form which its inventors gave it, and which the *subject* so naturally prescribes to it.

II. But, though the *common end* of poetry, which is to *please by imitation*, together with the subjects of its several species, may determine the *general plan*, yet is there nothing, it may be said, in the nature of things to fix *the order and connexion of single parts*. And here, it will be owned, is great room for *invention* to shew itself. The materials of poetry may be put together in so many different manners, consistently with the *form* which governs each species, that nothing but the power of *imitation* can be reasonably thought to produce *a close and perpetual similarity* in the composition of two works. I have said *a close and perpetual similarity;* for it is not every degree of resemblance, that will do here.

The *general plan itself* of any poem will occasion some unavoidable conformities in the disposition of its component parts. The *identity* or *similarity* of the subject may create others. Or, if no other assimilating cause intervene, the very uniformity of common nature, will, of necessity, introduce some. To explain myself as to the last of these *causes*.

The principal constituent members of any work, next to the essential parts of the *fable*, are EPISODES, DESCRIPTIONS, SIMILES. By *descriptions* I understand as well the delineation of *characters* in their *speeches and imputed sentiments*, as of *places or things* in the draught of their attending circumstances. Now not only the materials of these are common to all poets, but the same identical manner of assemblage in application of *each* in any poem will, in numberless cases, appear necessary.

1. The *episode* belongs, principally, to the epic muse; and the design of it is to diversify and ennoble the narration by *digressive*, yet not *unrelated*, ornaments; the *former* circumstance relieving the *simplicity* of the epic fable, while the *other* prevents its *unity* from being violated. Now these episodical narra-

tions must either proceed from the poet himself, or be imputed to some other who is engaged in the course of the fable; and in either case, must help, indirectly at least, to forward it.

If of the *latter* kind, a probable pretext must be contrived for their introduction; which can be no other than that of satisfying the *curiosity*, or of serving to the necessary *information* of some other. And in either of these ways a striking conformity in the mode of conducting the work is unavoidable.

If the *episode* be referred to the *former* class, its *manner* of introduction will admit a greater latitude. For it will vary with the subject, or occasions of relating it. Yet we shall mistake, if we believe these subjects, and consequently the occasions, connected with them, very numerous. 1. They must be of uncommon dignity and splendor; otherwise nothing can excuse the going out of the way to insert them. 2. They must have some apparent connection with the fable. 3. They must further accord to the idea and state of the times, from which the *fable* is taken. Put these things together, and see if they will not, with probability, account for some coincidence *in the choice and*

applications of the *direct* episode. And admitting this, the similarity of even *its* constituent parts is, also, necessary.

The genius of Virgil never suffers more in the opinion of his critics, than when his *book of games* comes into consideration and is confronted with Homer's. It is not unpleasant to observe the difficulties an advocate for his fame is put to in this nice point, to secure his honour from the imputation of *plagiarism.* The descriptions are accurately examined; and the improvement of a single circumstance, the addition of an epithet, even the novelty of a metaphor, or varied turn in the expression, is diligently remarked and urged, with triumph, in favour of his invention. Yet all this goes but a little way towards stilling the clamour. The entire design is manifestly taken; nay, particular incidents and circumstantials are, for the most part, the same, without variation. What shall we say, then, to this charge? Shall we, in defiance of truth and fact, endeavour to confute it? Or, if allowed, is there any method of supporting the reputation of the poet? I think there is, if prejudice will but suspend its determinations a few minutes, and afford his advocate a fair hearing.

The epic plan, more especially that of the Aeneis, naturally comprehends whatever is most august in *civil* and *religious* affairs. The solemnities of funeral rites, and the festivities of public games (which religion had made an essential part of them) were, of necessity, to be included in a representation of the *latter*. But what *games?* Surely those, which ancient heroism vaunted to excell in; those, which the usage of the times had consecrated; and which, from the opinion of reverence and dignity entertained of them, were become most fit for the pomp of epic description. Further, what *circumstances* could be noted in these sports? Certainly those, which befell most usually, and were the aptest to alarm the spectator, and make him take an interest in them. These, it will be said, are numerous. They are so; yet such as are most to the poet's purpose, are, with little or no variation, the same. It happened luckily for him, that two of his *games*, on which accordingly he hath exerted all the force of his genius, were entirely new. This advantage, the circumstances of the times afforded him. The *Naumachia* was purely his own. Yet so liable are even the best and most candid judges to be haunted by this spectre of *imitation*, that *one*, whom every

friend to every human excellence honours, cannot help, on comparing it with the *chariot-race* of Homer, exclaiming in these words; "What is the encounter of Cloanthus and Gyas "in the strait between the rocks, but the same "with that of Menelaus and Antilochus in the "hollow way? Had the galley of Serjestus "been broken, if the chariot of Eumelus had "not been demolished? Or, Mnestheus been "cast from the helm, had not the other been "thrown from his seat?" The plain truth is, it was not possible, in describing an ancient *sea-fight*, for one, who had even never seen Homer, to overlook such usual and striking particulars, as *the justling of ships, the breaking of galleys, and loss of pilots.*

It may appear from this instance, with what reason a similarity of circumstance, in the other games, hath been objected. The *subject-matter* admitted not any material variation: I mean in the hands of so judicious a copier of Nature as Virgil. For,

"Homer and Nature were, he found, the same."

So that we are not to wonder he kept close to his author, though at the expence of this false fame of ***Originality.*** Nay it appears

directly from a remarkable instance that in the case before us, He unquestionably judged right.

A defect of *natural ability* is not that, which the critics have been most forward to charge upon *Statius*. A person of true taste, who, in a fanciful way, hath contrived to give us the just character of the Latin poets, in assigning to this poet the topmost station on Parnassus, sufficiently acknowledges the vigour and activity of his genius. Yet, in composing his *Thebaid* (an old story taken from the heroic ages, which obliged him to the celebration of *funeral obsequies* with the attending solemnities of *public games)* to avoid the dishonour of following too closely on the heels of Homer and Virgil, who had not only taken the same *route*, but pursued it in the most direct and natural course, he resolved, at all adventures, to keep at due distance from them, and to make his way, as well as he could, more *obliquely* to the same end. To accomplish this project, he was forced, though in the description of the same individual *games*, to look out for different *circumstances and events* in them; that so the identity of his *subject*, which he could not avoid, might, in some degree, be atoned for by the diversity of his

manner in treating it. It must be owned, that great ingenuity as well as industry hath been used, in executing this design. Had it been practicable, the character, just given of this poet, makes it credible, he must have succeeded in it. Yet, so impossible it is, without deserting nature herself, to dissent from her faithful copiers, that the main objection to the sixth book of the *Thebaid* hath arisen from this fruitless endeavour of being *original*, where common sense and the reason of the thing would not permit it. "In the "particular descriptions of each of these games "(says the great writer before quoted, and "from whose sentence in matters of taste, "there lies no appeal) *Statius* hath not bor-"rowed from either of his predecessors, *and* "*his poem is so much the worse for it.*"

2. The case of DESCRIPTION is still clearer, and, after what has been so largely discoursed on the *subjects* of it, will require but few words. For it must have appeared, in considering them, that not only the *objects* themselves are necessarily obtruded on the poet, but that the *occasions* of introducing them are also restrained by many limitations. If we reflect a little, we shall find, that they grow out of the *action* represented, which, in the greater poetry,

implies a great *similarity*, even when most *different*. What, for instance, is the purpose of *the epic poet*, but to shew his hero under the most awful and interesing circumstances of human life? To this end some general design is formed. He must *war* with Achilles, or *voyage* with Ulysses. And, to work up his *fable* to that *magnificence*, ΜΕΓΑΛΟΠΡΕΠΕΙΑΝ, which Aristotle rightly observes to be the characteristic of this poem, *heaven* and *hell* must also be interested in the success of his enterprise. And what is this, in *effect*, but to own, that the pomp of *epic description*, in its draught of *battles*, with its several *accidents*; of *storms*, *shipwrecks*, &c. *of the intervention of gods*, or *machination of devils*, is, in great measure, determined, not only as to the *choice*, but *application* of it, to the poet's hands? And the like conclusion extends to still minuter particularities.

What concerns the delineation of *characters* may seem to carry with it more difficulty. Yet, though these are infinitely diversified by distinct peculiar lineaments, poetry cannot help falling into the same *general* representation. For it is conversant about the *greater characters*; such as demand the imputation of like *manners*, and who are actuated by the

same governing *passions*. To set off these, *the same combination of circumstances* must frequently be imagined; at least so *similar*, as to bring on the same series of representation. The *piety* of *one* hero, and the *love of his country*, which characterizes *another*, can only be shewn by the influence of the *ruling principle* in each, constraining them to neglect inferior considerations, and to give up all subordinate affections to it. The more prevalent the *affection*, the greater the *sacrifice*, and the more strongly is the *character* marked. Hence, without doubt, the *Calypso* of Homer. And need we look farther than the instructions of *common nature* for a similar contrivance in a *later* poet? Not to be tedious on a matter, which admits no dispute, the dramatic writings of all times may convince us of *two things*, 1. "*that the actuating passions of men are uni-*" *versally and invariably the same*;" and 2. "*that they express themselves constantly in* "*similar effects*." Or, one single small volume, *the characters of Theophrastus*, will sufficiently do it. And what more is required to justify this consequence, "that *the descrip-*" *tions of characters*, even in the most ori-" ginal *designers*, will resemble each other;" and "that the very *contexture* of a work, de-" signed to evidence them in *action*, will,

"under the management of different writers, "be, frequently, much the same?" A *conclusion*, which indeed is neither mine nor any novel one, but was long ago insisted on by a discerning ancient, and applied to the comic drama, in these words,

—*Si personis isdem uti aliis non licet,*
Qui magis licet currentis servos scribere,
Bonas matronas facere, meretrices malas,
Parasitum edacem, gloriosum militem,
Puerum supponi, falli per servum senem,
AMARE, ODISSE, SUSPICARI?

3. In truth, so far as *direct and immediate description* is concerned, the matter is so plain, that it will hardly be called into question. The difficulty is to account for the similarity of *metaphor and* COMPARISON (that is, of *imagery*, which comes in obliquely, and for the purpose of illustrating some other, and, frequently, very remote and distinct subject) observable in all writers. Here it may not seem quite so easy to make out an original claim; for, though descriptions of the *same object*, when it occurs, must needs be similar, yet it remains to shew how the same object comes, in this case, to occur at all. Before an answer can be given to this question, it

must be observed 1. that there is in the mind of man, not only a strong natural love of *imitation*, but of *comparison*. We are not only fond of *copying* single objects, as they present themselves, but we delight to set two objects together, and contemplate their mutual aspects and appearances. The *pleasure* we find in this exercise of the imagination is the main source of that perpetual usage of *indirect and allusive imagery* in the writings of the poets; for I need not here consider the *necessity* of the thing, and the unavoidable introduction of sensible images into all language. 2. This work of *comparison* is not gone about by the mind *causelessly and capriciously*. There are certain obvious and striking resemblances in nature, which the poet is carried necessarily to observe, and which offer themselves to him on the slightest exercise and exertion of his *comparing* powers. It may be difficult to explain the causes of this established relationship in all cases; or to shew distinctly, what these secret ties and connexions are, which link the objects of sense together, and draw the imagination thus insensibly from one subject to another. The most obvious and natural is that of *actual similitude*, whether in *shape*, *attitude*, *colour*, or *aspect*. As when *heroes* are compared to *gods*,—*a hero in act to strike*

at his foe, to *a faulcon stooping at a dove*,—*blood running down the skin*, to *the staining of ivory*,—*corn waving with the wind*, to *water in motion*. Sometimes the associating cause lies in the *effect*. As when the *return of a good prince to his country* is compared *to the sun*—a *fresh gale to mariners*, to *the timely coming of a general to his troops*, &c. more commonly, in some *property*, *attribute*, or *circumstance*. Thus an *intrepid* hero suggests the idea of a *rock*, on account of *its firmness and stability*;—of *a lion*, for his *fierceness*,—*of a deer encompassed* with wolves, for his *situation when surrounded with enemies*. In short, for I pretend not to make a complete enumeration of the *grounds* of connexion, whatever the mind observes in any object, that bears an analogy to something in any other, becomes the *occasion* of comparison betwixt them; and the fancy, which is ever, in a great genius, quick at espying these *traits* of resemblance, and delights to survey them, lets slip no opportunity of setting them over against each other, and producing them to observation.

But whatever be the *causes*, which associate the ideas of the poet, and how fantastic soever or even casual, may sometimes appear to be

the *ground* of such association, yet, in respect of the greater works of genius, there will still be found the most exact *uniformity* of allusion, the same ideas and aspects of things constantly admonishing the poet of the same *resemblances and relations*. I say, in *the greater works of genius*, which must be attended to; for the folly of taking *resemblances* for *imitations*, in this province of *allusion*, hath arisen from hence; that the poet is believed to have all art and nature before him, and to be at liberty to fetch his *hints* of similitude and correspondence from every distant and obscure corner of the universe. That is, the genius of the epic, dramatic, and universally, of the greater, poetry hath not been comprehended, nor their distinct laws and characters distinguished from those of an inferior species.

The *mutual habitudes and relations* (at least what the mind is capable of regarding as *such*), subsisting between those innumerable objects of thought and sense, which make up the entire natural and intellectual world, are indeed infinite; and if the poet be allowed to associate and bring together all those ideas, wherein the ingenuity of the mind can perceive any remote sign or glimpse of *resemblance*, it were truly wonderful, that, in any number of

images and allusions, there should be found a close conformity of them with those of any other writer. But this is far from being the case. For 1. the more august poetry disclaims, as unsuited to its state and dignity, that inquisitive and anxious diligence, which pries into nature's retirements; and searches through all her secret and hidden haunts, to detect a forbidden commerce, and expose to light some strange unexpected conjunction of ideas. This quaint combination of remote, unallied imagery, constitutes a species of entertainment, which, for its *novelty*, may amuse and divert the mind in other compositions; but is wholly inconsistent with the reserve and solemnity of the *graver* forms. There is too much curiosity of art, too solicitous an affectation of *pleasing*, in these ingenious exercises of the fancy, to suit with the simple majesty of the *epos* or *drama*; which disclaims to cast about for forced and tortured allusions, and aims only to expose, in the fairest light, such as are most obvious and natural. And here, by the way, it may be worth observing, in honour of a great Poet of the last century, I mean Dr. Donne, that, though agreeably to the turn of his genius, and taste of his age, he was fonder, than ever poet was, of these *secret and hidden*

ways in his lesser poetry; yet when he had projected his great work "*On the progress of* "*the soul*" (of which we have only the beginning) his good sense brought him out into the freer *spaces* of nature and open day-light.

Largior hic compos æther, et lumine vestit
Purpureo: solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.

In this, the author of GONDIBERT, and another writer of credit, a contemporary of DONNE, Sir FULK GREVIL, were not so happy. 2. This work of *indirect imagery* is intended, not so much to illustrate and enforce the original thought, to which it is applied, as to amuse and entertain the fancy, by holding up to view, in these occasional digressive representations, the pictures of pleasing scenes and objects. But this *end* of allusion (which is principal in the sublimer works of genius) restrains the poet to the use of a few select images, for the most part taken from obvious common nature; these being always most illustrious in themselves, and therefore most apt to seize and captivate the imagination of the reader. Thus is the poet confined, by the very nature of his work, to a very moderate compass of allusion, on both these accounts; *first*, as he must employ the easiest and most

apparent resemblances: and *secondly*, of *these*, such as impress the most delightful images on the fancy.

This being the case, it cannot but happen, that the allusions of different poets, of the higher class, though writing without any communication with each other, will, of course, be much the same on similar occasions. There are fixed and real analogies between different *material objects;* between these objects, and the *inward workings* of the mind; and, again, between these, and the *external signs* of them. Such, on every occasion, do not so properly offer themselves to the searching eye of the poet, as force themselves upon him; so that, if he submit to be guided by the most natural views of things, he cannot avoid a very remarkable correspondence of imagery with his predecessors. And we find this conclusion verified in fact; as appears not only from comparing together the great ancient and modern writers, who are known to have held an intimate correspondence with each other, but those, who cannot be suspected of this commerce. Several critics, I observed, have taken great pains to illustrate the sentiments of Homer from similar instances in the sacred writers. The same design might easily be carried on,

in respect of *allusive imagery*; it being obvious to common observation, that numberless of the most beautiful *comparisons* in the Greek poet are to be met with in the Hebrew prophets. Nay, the remark may be extended to the undisciplined writers and speakers of the farthest *west* and *east*, whom nature instructs to beautify and adorn their conceptions with the same imagery. So little doth it argue an inferiority of genius in Virgil, if it be true, as the excellent translator of Homer says, "that he "has scarcely any *comparisons*, which are not "drawn from his master."

The truth is, the *nature* of the two subjects, which the Greek poet had taken upon himself to adorn, was such, that it led him through every circumstance and situation of human life; which his quick attentive observation readily found the means of shewing to advantage under the cover of the most fit and proper imagery. Succeeding writers, who had *not* contemplated his pictures, yet, drawing from one common original, have unknowingly hit upon the very same. And those, who *had*, with all their endeavours after *novelty*, and the utmost efforts of genius to strike out original lights, have never been able to succeed in their attempts. Our *Milton*, who was most

ambitious of this fame of *invention,* and whose vast and universal genius could not have missed of new *analogies,* had nature's self been able to furnish them, is a glaring instance to our purpose. He was so averse from resting in the old imagery of Homer, and the other epic poets, that he appears to have taken infinite pains in the investigation of new *allusions,* which he picked up out of the rubbish of every silly legend or romance, that had come to his knowledge, or extracted from the dry and rugged materials of the sciences, and even the mechanic arts. Yet, in comparison of the genuine treasures of nature, which he found himself obliged to make use of, in common with other writers, his own proper stock of *images,* imported from the regions of *art,* is very poor and scanty; and, as might be expected, makes the least agreeable part of his divine work.

What is here said of the epic holds, as I hinted, of all the more serious kinds of poetry. In works of a lighter cast, there is greater liberty and a larger field of allusion permitted to the poet. All the appearances in *art* and *nature,* betwixt which there is any resemblance, may be employed here to surprize and divert the fancy. The further and more remote from

vulgar apprehension these analogies lie, so much the fitter for his purpose, which is not so much to illustrate his ideas, as to place them in new and uncommon lights, and entertain the mind by that odd fantastic conjunction, or opposition of ideas, which we know by the name of *wit*. Nay, the *lowest*, as well as the least obvious imagery will be, oftentimes, the most proper; his view being not to ennoble and raise his subject by the means of *allusion*, but to sink and debase it by every art, that hath a tendency to excite the mirth and provoke the ridicule of the reader. Here then we may expect a much more original air, than in the higher designs of invention. When all nature is before the poet, and the genius of his work allows him to seize her, as the shepherd did Proteus, in every dirty form, into which she can possibly twist herself, it were, indeed, a wonder, if he should *chance* to coincide, in his imagery, with any other, from whom he had not expressly copied. They who are conversant in works of *wit and humour*, more especially of these later times, will know this to be the case, in *fact*. There is not perhaps a single comparison in the inimitable TELEMAQUE, which had not, before, been employed by some or other of the poets. Can any thing, like this,

be said of RABELAIS, BUTLER, MARVEL, SWIFT, &c.?

III. It only remains to consider the EXPRESSION. And in this are to be found the surest and least equivocal marks of *imitation*. We may regard it in *two* lights; either 1. as it respects the *general* turn or manner of writing, which we call a *style*; or 2. the peculiarities of *phrase and diction*.

1. A *style* in writing, if not formed in express imitation of some certain *model*, is the pure result of the disposition of the mind, and takes its character from the predominant *quality* of the writer. Thus a *short and compact*, and a *diffused and flowing* expression are the proper consequences of certain corresponding characters of the human genius. One has a vigorous comprehensive conception, and therefore collects his sense into few words. Another, whose imagination is more languid, contemplates his objects leisurely, and so displays their beauties in a greater compass of words, and with more circumstance and parade of language. A polite and elegant humour delights in the grace of ease and perspicuity. A severe and melancholic spirit inspires a forcible but involved expression. There are many

other nicer differences and peculiarities of *manner*, which, though not reducible, perhaps, to general heads, the critic of true taste easily understands.

2. As men of different tempers and dispositions assume a different cast of expression, so may the same observation be applied, still more *generally*, to different *countries and times*. It may be difficult to explain the *efficient causes* of this diversity, which I have no concern with at present. The *fact* is, that the eloquence of the *eastern* world has, at all times, been of another strain from that of the *western*. And, also, in the several provinces of *each*, there has been some peculiar *note* of variation. The *Asiatic*, of old, had its proper stamp, which distinguished it from the *Attic*; just as the *Italian*, *French*, and *Spanish* wits have, each, their several characteristic manners of expression.

A different state of *times* has produced the like effect; which a late writer accounts for, not unaptly, from what he calls a *progression of life and manners*. That which cannot be disputed is, that the *modes* of writing undergo a perpetual change or variation in every country. And it is further observable, that these

changes in one country, under similar circumstances, have a signal correspondence to those, which the incessant rotation of taste brings about in every other.

Of near affinity to this last consideration is *another* arising from the *corresponding genius* of two people, however remote from each other in time and place. And, as it happens, the application may be made directly to ourselves in a very important instance. "Languages, "says one, always take their character from "the genius of a people. So that two the "most distant states, thinking and acting with "the same generous love of mankind, must "needs have very near the same combinations "of ideas.—And it is our boast that in this "conformity we approach the nearest to an-"cient Greece and Italy." I quote these words from a tract[s], which the author perhaps may consider with the same neglect, as Cicero did his earlier compositions on *Rhetoric;* but which the curious will regard with reverence, as a fine essay of his genius, and a prelude to the great things he was afterwards seen capable of producing. But to come to the use we may

[s] *A Critical and Philosophical Inquiry into the causes of prodigies and miracles,* &c. p. 130.

make of this fine observation. The corresponding state of the English and Roman people has produced very near the same *combinations of ideas*. May we not carry the conclusion still further on the same principle, that it produced very near the same *combinations of words?* The fact is, as the same writer observes, That "we have a language "that is brief, comprehensive, nervous, and "majestic." The very character which an old Roman would give us of his own language. And when the same general character of language prevails, is it any thing strange that the different modifications of it, or *peculiar styles*, arising from the various turns and dispositions of writers (which, too, in such circumstances will be corresponding) should therefore be very similar in the productions of the two states? Or, in other words, can we wonder that some of our best writers bear a nearer resemblance, I mean independently of direct imitation, to the Latin classics, than those of any other people in modern times?

But let it suffice to leave these remarks without further comment or explanation.

The use the discerning reader will make of them is, that if different writers agree in

the same *general disposition*, or in the same *national character*; live together in the *same period of time*; or in corresponding periods of the *progression of manners*, or are under the influence of a corresponding genius of *policy and government*; in every of these cases, some *considerable similarity* of expression may be occasioned by the agency of *general principles*, without any suspicion of studied or designed *imitation*.

II. An *identity of phrase and diction*, is a much surer note of *plagiarism*. For considering the vast variety of *words*, which any language, and especially the more copious ones furnish, and the infinite possible combinations of them into all the forms of *phraseology*, it would be very strange, if two persons should hit on the same identical *terms*, and much more should they agree in the same precise arrangement of them in whole sentences.

There is no defending *coincidences* of this kind; and whatever writers themselves may pretend, or their friends for them, no one can doubt a moment of such *identity* being a clear and decisive proof of *imitation*.

Yet this must be understood with some limitations.

For 1. There are in every language some current and authorized forms of speech, which can hardly be avoided by a writer without affectation. They are such as express the most obvious sentiments, and which the ordinary occasions of life are perpetually obtruding on us. Now these, as by common agreement, we chuse to deliver to one another in the same *form* of words. Convenience dictates this to one set of writers, and politeness renders it sacred in another. Thus it will be true of certain *phrases* (as, universally, of the *words*, in any language), that they are left in common to all writers, and can be claimed as matter of *property*, by none. Not that such phraseology will be frequent in nobler compositions, as the familiarity of its usage takes from their natural reserve and dignity. Yet on certain *occasions*, which justify this negligence, or in certain *authors*, who are not over-sollicitous about these indecorums, we may expect to meet with it. Hamlet says of his father,

He was a man, take him for all in all;
I shall not look upon his like again.

which may be suspected of being stolen from Sophocles, who has the following passage in the TRACHINIAE.

Πάντων ἄριστον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπὶ χθονὶ
Κτείνας', ΟΠΟΙΟΝ ΑΛΛΟΝ ΟΥΚ ΟΨΕΙ
ΠΟΤΕ. v. 824.

The sentiment being one of the commonest, that offers itself to the mind, the sole ground of suspicion must lie in the *expression*, "*I* "*shall not look upon his like again*," to which the Greek so exactly answers. But these were the ordinary expressions of such sentiment, in the two languages; and neither the characters of the great poets, nor the situation of the speakers, would suffer the *affectation* of departing from common usage.

What is here said of the *situation of the speakers* reminds me of another *class* of expressions, which will often be *similar* in all poets. *Nature*, under the *same* conjunctures, gives birth to the *same* conceptions; and if they be of such a kind, as to exclude all thought of artifice, and the tricks of eloquence (as on occasions of deep anxiety and distress) they run, of themselves, into the *same* form of expression. The wretched Priam, in his lamentation of Hector, lets drop the following words:

ὦ μοι ἄχῳ ὀξὺ κατοίσεται ἄϊδῳ εἴσω·

" This line, says his translator, is particularly " tender, and almost, word for word, the " same with that of the Patriarch *Jacob*; who, " upon a like occasion, breaks out in the same " complaint, and tells his children, that, if " they deprive him of his son *Benjamin, they* " *will bring down his grey hairs with sorrow* " *to the grave.*"

We may, further, except, under this head, certain privileged forms of speech, which the peculiar idioms of *different* languages make necessary in them, and which poetry consecrates in *all*. But this is easily observed, and its effect is not very considerable.

2. In pleading this *identity of expression*, regard must be had to the *language*, from which the *theft* is supposed to be made. If from the *same* language (setting aside the exceptions, just mentioned) *the same arrangement of the same words* is admitted as a certain argument of *plagiarism*: nay, less than this will do in some instances, as where the *imitated expression* is pretty *singular*, or so remarkable, on any account, as to be *well known*, &c. But if from *another* language, the matter is not so easy. It can rarely happen, indeed, but by design, that there should

be the *same order or composition* of words, in two languages. But that which passes even for *literal translation*, is but *a similar composition of corresponding words*. And what does this imply, but that the writers conceived of their *object* in the same *manner*, and had occasion to set it in the same light? An occasion, which is perpetually recurring to all authors. As may be gathered from that frequent and strong resemblance in the *expression* of moral sentiments, observable in the writers of every age and country. Can there be a commoner reflexion, or which more constantly occurs to the mind under the same appearance, than *that* of our great poet, who, speaking of the state after death, calls it

That undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns.

Shall we call this a translation of the Latin poet;

Nunc it per iter tenebricosum
Illuc, unde negant redire quenquam.
CATUL. III. v. 11.

Or, doth it amount to any more than this, that the terms employed by the two writers in expressing the same obvious thought are *correspondent*? But *correspondency* and *identity*

are different things. The *latter* is only, where the words are *numerically* the same, which can only happen in one and the same language: the other is effected by *different sets of words*, which are numerous in every language, and are therefore no convincing proof (abstractedly from other circumstances) of *imitation*.

From these general reflexions on *language*, without refining too far, or prying too curiously into the mysteries of it, the same conclusion meets us, as before. The *expression* of two writers may be *similar*, and sometimes even *identical*, and yet be *original* in both. Which shews the necessity there was to lead the reader through this long investigation of the general sources of *similitude* in works of INVENTION, in order to put him into a condition of judging truly and equitably of those of IMITATION. For if *similarity*, even in this province of *words*, which the reason of the thing shews to be most free from the constraint of general rules, be no argument of *theft* in all cases; much less can it be pretended of the other *subjects* of this inquiry, which from the necessary uniformity of *nature* in all her appearances, and of *common sense* in its operations upon them, must give frequent and

unavoidable occasion to such *similarity*. But then this is all I would insinuate.

For, after the proper allowances, which candid criticism requires to be made on this head, it will still be true (and nothing in this Essay attempts to contradict it) "that coincidencies of a certain *kind*, and in a certain "*degree*, cannot fail to convict a writer of "*imitation*." What these *are*, the impatient reader, I suppose, is ready to enquire. And, not entirely to disappoint him, I have thrown together, at the close of this volume, some remarks which, perhaps, will be of use in solving that difficult question[t]. In the mean time, it seemed of importance to free the mind from the perversion of that early prejudice, which is so prompt to mistake *resemblance* universally for *imitation*. And what other method of effecting this, than by taking a view of the extent and influence of the genuine powers of *nature*, which, when rightly apprehended, make it an easier task to detect, in particular instances, the intervention of *design*?

Allowing then (what this previous inquiry not only no way contradicts but even assists us

[t] Letter to Mr. Mason.

in perceiving more clearly) that certain *resemblances* may be urged as undoubted proofs of *imitation*, it remains only to the integrity of this discourse, to satisfy that other question, "*how far the credit of the imitator is con-*" *cerned in the discovery*;" or, in other words, (since the praise of *invention* is of the highest value to the poet) "how far the concession of "his having borrowed from others, may be "justly thought to detract from him in that "respect." An *inquiry*, which, though for its consequences to the fame of all great writers, since the time of Homer, of much importance, may yet be dispatched in few words.

SECTION II.

IN entering on this apology for *professed imitators*, I shall not be suspected of undervaluing the proper merits of *invention*, which unquestionably holds the first place in the *virtutes* of a poet, and is that power, which, of all others, enables him to give the highest entertainment to the reader. Much less will it be thought, that I am here pleading the cause of those base and abject spirits, who have not the courage or ability to attempt any thing of themselves, and can barely make a shift, as a great poet of our own expresses it, *to creep servilely after the sense of* some other. These I readily resign to the shame and censure, which have so justly followed them in all ages; as subscribing to the truth of that remark, "*Imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit*, vel *quia* "*pigri est ingenii, contentum esse iis, quae* "*sunt ab aliis inventa*." My concern is only with those, whose talent of original genius is not disputed, but the *degree* of strength and vigour, with which it prevails in them, somewhat lowered in the general estimation, from

this imputed crime of PLAGIARISM. And, with respect to such as these, something, I conceive, may be said, not undeserving the notice of the candid reader.

1. The most universal cause, inducing *imitation* in great writers, is, the force of early *discipline and education*. Were it true, that poets took their *descriptions and images* immediately from common nature, one might expect, indeed, a general *similitude* in their works, but such, as could seldom or never, in all its circumstances, amount to a strict and rigorous correspondency. The *properties* of things are so numerous, and the *lights* in which they shew themselves to a mind uninfluenced by former prejudices, so different, that some grace of novelty, some tincture of original beauty, would constantly infuse itself into all their delineations. But the case is far otherwise. Strong as the bent of the imagination may be to contemplate living forms, and to gaze with delight on this grand theatre of *nature*, its attention is soon taken off, and arrested, on all sides, by those infinite mirrors, and reflexions of things, which it every where meets with in the world of *imitation*. We are habituated to a survey of this *secondary and derivative nature*, as presented in the admired

works of *art*, through the entire course of our education. The writings of the best poets are put into our hands, to instruct us in the knowledge of *men and things*, as soon as we are capable of apprehending them. Nay, we are taught to lisp their very *words*, in our tenderest infancy. Some quick and transient glances we cannot chuse but cast, at times, on the phænomena of living beauty; but its forms are rarely contemplated by us with diligence, but in these *mirrors*, which are the constant furniture of our schools and closets. And no wonder, were we even left to ourselves, that such should be our *proper* choice and determination. For, by the prodigious and almost magical operations of *fancy* on original objects, they even shew fairer, and are made to look more attractive, in these artificial representations, than in their own rude and native aspects. Thus, by the united powers of *discipline* and *inclination*, we are almost necessitated to *see* nature in the same *light*, and to know her only in the *dress*, in which her happier suitors and favourites first gave her to observation.

The effect of this early bias of the mind, which insensibly grows into the inveteracy of habit, needs not be insisted on. When the

poet, thus tutored in the works of *imitation*, comes to address himself to *invention*, these familiar images, which he hath so often and so fondly admired, immediately step in and intercept his observation of their great *original*. Or, if he has power to hold them off, and turn his eye directly on the *primary object*, he still inclines to view it only on that side and in those *lights*, in which he has been accustomed to study it. Nor let it be said, that this is the *infirmity*, only, of weak minds. It belongs to our very natures, and the utmost vigour of genius is no security against it. *Custom*, in this as in every thing else, moulds, at pleasure, the soft and ductile matter of a *minute* spirit, and by degrees can even bend the elastic metal of the *greatest*.

And if the force of habit can thus determine a writer knowingly, to *imitation*, it cannot be thought strange, that it should frequently carry him into *resemblance*, when himself perhaps is not aware of it. Great readers, who have their memories fraught with the stores of ancient and modern poetry, unavoidably employ the *sentiments*, and sometimes the very *words*, of other writers, without any distinct remembrance of them, or so much as the suspicion of having seen them. At the least, their

general cast of thinking or turn of expression will be much affected by them. For the most original writer as certainly takes a *tincture* from the authors in which he has been most conversant; as water, from the beds of earths or minerals, it hath happened to run over. Especially such authors, as are studied and even got by heart by us in our early youth, leave a lasting impression, which is hardly ever effaced out of the mind. Hence a certain constrained and unoriginal air, in some degree or other, in every genius, throughly disciplined by a *course of learned education.* Which, by the way, leads to a question, not very absurd in itself, however it may pass with most readers for paradoxical, viz. "*Whether the usual "forms of learning be not rather injurious to "the true poet, than really assisting to him?*" It should seem to be so for a *natural reason.* For the faculty of *invention,* as all our other powers, is much improved and strengthened by exercise. And great reading prevents this, by demanding the perpetual exercise of the *memory.* Thus the mind becomes not only indisposed, but, for want of use, really unqualified, to turn itself to other views, than such as habitual recollection easily presents to it. And this, I am persuaded, hath been the case with many a fine genius, and especially

with *one* of our own country[u]; who, as appears from some original efforts in the sublime allegorical way, had no want of natural talents for the greater poetry; which yet were so restrained and disabled by his constant and superstitious study of the old classics, that he was, in fact, but a very ordinary poet.

2. But were early *habit* of less power to incline the mind to *imitation*, than it really is, yet the high hand of *authority* would compel it. For the first originals in the several species of poetry, like the Autocthones of old, were deemed to have come into the world by a kind of miracle. They were perfect prodigies, at least reputed so by the admiring multitude, from their first appearance. So that their authority, in a short time, became sacred; and succeeding writers were obliged, at the hazard of their fame, and as they dreaded the charge of a presumptuous and *prophane libertinism* in poetry, to take them for their guides and models. Which is said even without the licence of a figure; at least of *one* of them; whom Cicero calls *the fountain and origin of all* DIVINE *institutions*[w]; and another, of elder

[u] Mr. Addison. [w] *Somn. Scip.* ii. c. 10.

and more reverend estimation, pronounces to be ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῶν προφήτης[x].

And what is here observed of the *influence* of these master spirits, whom the admiration of antiquity hath placed at the head of the poetic world, will, with some allowance, hold also, of *that* of later, though less original writers, whose uncommon merits have given them a distinguished rank in it.

3. *Next*, (as it usually comes to pass in other instances) what was, at first, imposed by the rigour of *authority*, soon grew respectable in *itself*, and was chosen for its own sake, as a *virtue*, which deserved no small commendation. For, when sober and enlightened criticism began to inspect, at leisure, these miracles of early invention, it presently acknowledged them for the *best*, as well as the most *ancient*, poetic models, and accordingly recommended, or more properly enjoined them by rule, to the imitation of all ages. The effect of this criticism was clearly seen in the works of all succeeding poets in the *same* language. But, when a new and different one was to be

[x] Plato, *Alcibiad.*

furnished with fresh *models*, it became much more conspicuous. For, besides the same or a still higher veneration of their *inventions*, which the distance of place and time insensibly procured to them, the grace of *novelty*, which they would appear to have in another *language*, was, now, a further inducement to copy them. Hence we find it to be the utmost pride of the *Roman* writers, such I mean as came the nearest to them in the divinity of their genius, to follow the practice, and emulate the virtues, of the *Grecian*.

Libera per vacuum posui vestigia princeps,
Non aliena meo pressi pede—

says *one* of the best of those writers, who yet was only treading in the *footsteps* of his Grecian masters.

But *another* was less reserved, and seemed desirous of being taken notice of, as an express *imitator*, without so much as laying in his claim to this sort of originality, in a new language—in multis versibus Virgilius fecit—non surripiendi causâ, sed *palam* imitandi, *hoc animo ut vellet agnosci*. *Sen. Suasor.* III.

And, on the revival of these arts in later times and more barbarous languages, the same

spirit appeared again, or rather superior honours were paid to successful *imitation*. So that what a polite French writer declares on this head is, now, become the fixed opinion of the learned in all countries. "C'est même "donner une grace à ses ouvrages, que de les "orner de fragmens antiques. Des vers d'Ho- "race et de Virgile bien traduits, et mis en "œuvre à propos dans un poëme François, y "font le même effet que les statuës antiques "font dans la gallerie de Versailles. Les lec- "teurs retrouvent avec plaisir, sous une nou- "velle forme, la pensée, qui leur plût autrefois "en Latin[y]."

It should, further, be added, that this praise of borrowing from the originals of *Greece* and *Rome* is now extended to the imitation of great *modern* authors. Every body applauds this practice, where the imitation is of approved writers in *different* languages. And even in the *same* languages, when this liberty is taken with the most ancient and venerable, it is not denied to have its *grace* and merit.

4. But, besides these several incitements, *similarity of genius*, alone, will, almost ne-

y *Reflex. sur la Poës. et sur la Peint* tom. ii. 8o. Par. 1746.

cessarily determine a writer to the studious emulation of some other. For, though it is with the *minds*, as the *faces* of men, that no two are exactly and in every feature alike; yet the general cast of their genius, as well as the air and turn of the countenance, will frequently be very *similar* in different persons. When two such spirits approach, they run together with eagerness and rapidity: the instinctive bias of the mind towards *imitation* being now quickened by *passion*. This is chiefly said in respect of that uniformity of *style and manner*, which, whenever we observe it in two writers, we almost constantly charge to the account of *imitation*. Indeed, where the resemblance holds to the last degree of *minuteness*, or where the *peculiarities*, only, of the model are taken, there is ground enough for this suspicion. For every original genius, however consonant, in the main, to any other, has still some distinct marks and characters of his own, by which he may be distinguished; and to copy *peculiarities*, when there is no appearance of the same original spirit, which gave birth to them, is manifest affectation. But the question is put of such, whose *manner* hath only a *general*, though strong, resemblance to that of some other, and whose true genius is above the suspicion of falling into the

trap of what Horace happily calls, EXEMPLAR VITIIS IMITABILE. And of these it is perhaps juster to say, that a previous correspondency of *character* impelled to *imitate*, than that imitation itself produced that correspondency of *character*. At least (which is all my concern at present) it will be allowed to incline a writer strongly to *imitation*; and where a congenial spirit appears to provoke him to it, a candid critic will not be forward to turn this circumstance to the dishonour of his *invention*.

5. Lastly, were every other consideration out of the way, yet, oftentimes, the *very nature of the poet's theme* would oblige him to a diligent *imitation* of preceding writers. I do not mean this of such subjects, as suggest and produce a necessary conformity of description, whether purposely intended or not. This hath been fully considered. But my meaning is, that, when the greater provinces of poetry have been, already, occupied, and its most interesting scenes exhausted; or, rather, their application to the uses of poetry determined by great masters, it becomes, thenceforward, unavoidable for succeeding writers to draw from their sources. The law of probability exacts this at their hands; and one may almost affirm, that to *copy* them closely is to paint after

nature. I shall explain myself by an instance or two.

With regard to the religious opinions and ceremonies of the Pagan world, the writings of Homer, it is said and very truly, were "*the* "*standard of private belief, and the grand* "*directory of public worship*[z]." Whatever liberty might have been taken with the rites and gods of Paganism before his time, yet, when he had given an exact description of *both,* and had formed, to the satisfaction of all, the established religion into a kind of *system,* succeeding poets were obliged, of course, to take their theology from him; and could no longer be thought to write *justly and naturally* of their Gods, than whilst their *descriptions* conformed to the *authentic* delineations of *Homer.* His relations, and even the *fictions,* which his genius had raised on the popular creed of elder Paganism, were now the proper archetype of all *religious representations.* And to speak of *these,* as given *truly and originally,* is, in effect, to say, that they were borrowed or rather transcribed from the page of *that poet.*

[z] *Inquiry into the L. and W. of Homer,* p. 174.

And the same may be observed of *historical facts*, as of *religious traditions*. For not unfrequently, where the subject is taken from authentic history, the authority of a preceding poet is so prevalent, as to render *any* account of the matter improbable, which is not fashioned and regulated after his ideas. A succeeding writer is neither at liberty to relate matters of fact, which no one thinks *credible*, nor to *feign* afresh for himself. In this case, again, all that the most original genius has to do, is to *imitate*. We have been told that the *second book of the* AENEIS was translated from Pisander[a]. Another thinks, it was taken from the LITTLE ILIAD[b]. Or, why confine him to either of these, when METRODORUS, SYAGRUS, HEGESIANAX, ARATUS, and others, wrote poems on *the taking* of TROY? But granting the poet (as is most likely) to have had these originals before him, what shall we infer from it? Only this, that he took his principal facts and circumstances (as we see he was obliged to do for the sake of *probability*) from these writers. And why should this be thought a greater crime in him, than

[a] MACROBIUS, V. *Saturnal.*

[b] *Inquiry into L. &c. of Homer*, p. 319.

in POLYGNOTUS; who, in his famous picture on this subject, was under the necessity, and for the same reason, of collecting his *subject-matter* from several poets[c]?

It follows, from these considerations, that we cannot justify ourselves in thinking so hardly, as we commonly do, of the class of *imitators;* which is, now, by the concurrence of various circumstances, become the necessary character of almost all poets. Nor let it be any concern to the *true* poet, that it is so. For *imitations*, when real and confessed, may still have their merit; nay, I presume to add, sometimes a *greater* merit, than the very originals on which they are formed: And, with the reader's leave (though I am hastening to a conclusion of this long discourse), I will detain him, one moment, with the reasons of this opinion.

After all the praises that are deservedly given to the novelty of a *subject*, or the beauty of *design*, the supreme merit of poetry, and that which more especially immortalizes the writers of it, lies in the *execution*. It is thus that

[c] *Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscript. &c.* tom. vi. p. 445.

the poets of the Augustan age have not so properly excelled, as discredited, all the productions of their predecessors; and that those of the age of Louis XIVth not only obscure, but will in process of time obliterate, the fame and memory of the elder French writers. Or, to see the effect of masterly execution in single instances, hence it is, that Lucilius not only yields to Horace, but would be almost forgotten by us, if it had not been for the honour his imitator has done him. And nobody needs be told the advantage which Pope is likely to have over all our older satirists, excellent as some of them are, and more entitled than he to the honour of being inventors. We have here, then, an established *fact*. The first essays of genius, though ever so original, are overlooked; while the later productions of men, who had never risen to such distinction but by means of the very originals they disgrace, obtain the applause and admiration of all ages.

The solution of this *fact*, so notorious, and, at the same time, so contrary, in appearance, to the honours which men are disposed to pay to original invention, will open the mystery of that matter we are now considering.

The faculties, or, as we may almost term them, the magic powers, which *ope the palace of eternity* to great writers, are a *confirmed judgment*, and *ready invention.*

Now the *first* is seen to most advantage, in selecting, out of all preceding stores, the particulars that are most suited to the nature of a poet's work, and the ends of poetry. When true genius has exhausted, as it were, the various *manners*, in which a work of art may be conducted, and the various *topics* which may be employed to adorn it, *judgment* is in its province, or rather sovereignty, when it determines which of all these is to be preferred, and which neglected. In this sense, as well as others, it will be most true, *Quòd artis pars magna contineatur imitatione.*

Nay, by means of this discernment, the very *topic* or method, which had no effect, or perhaps an ill one, under one management, or in one situation, shall charm every reader, in another. And by force of *judging right*, the copier shall almost lose his title, and become an inventor:

Tantum *de medio* sumptis accedit honoris.

But imitation, though it give most room to the display of judgment, does not exclude the exercise of the other faculty, *invention*. Nay, it requires the most dextrous, perhaps the most difficult, exertion of this faculty. For consider how the case stands. When we speak of an *imitator*, we do not speak, as the poet says, of

A barren-spirited fellow, one who feeds
On abject orts, and imitations—

but of one, who, in aiming to be like, contends also to be equal to his original. To attain to this *equality*, it is not enough that he select the best of those stores which are ready prepared to his hand (for thus he would be rather a skilful borrower, than a successful imitator); but, in taking something from others, he must add much of his own: he must improve the *expression*, where it is defective or barely passable: he must throw fresh lights of fancy on a common *image:* he must strike out new hints from a vulgar *sentiment*. Thus, he will complete his original, where he finds it *imperfect:* he will supply its *omissions:* he will emulate, or rather surpass, its highest *beauties*. Or, in despair of this last, we shall find him taking a different *route;* giving us

an equivalent in a beauty of another kind, which yet he extracts from some latent intimation of his author; or, where his purpose requires the very same representation, giving it a new form, perhaps a nobler, by the turn of his application.

But all this requires not only the truest judgment, but the most delicate operation of inventive genius. And, where they both meet in a supreme degree, we sometimes find an admired original, not only excelled by his imitator, but almost discredited. Of which, if there were no other, the sixth book of Virgil, I mean taking it in the light of an *imitation*, is an immortal instance.

Thus much I could not forbear saying on the *merit* of successful imitation. As to the *necessity* of the thing, hear the apology of a great Poet, for himself. "All that is left us, "says this original writer, is to recommend "our productions by the imitation of the an-"cients: and it will be found true, that, in "every age, the highest character for sense "and learning has been obtained by those who "have been the most indebted to them. For, "to say truth, whatever is very good sense, "must have been common sense in all times;

" and what we call learning is but the know-
" ledge of our predecessors. Therefore they
" who say our thoughts are not our own, be-
" cause they resemble the ancients, may as
" well say, our faces are not our own, because
" they are like our fathers: and indeed it is
" very unreasonable, that people should expect
" us to be scholars, and yet be angry to find
" us so[d]."

He adds, " *I fairly confess, that I have* " *served myself all I could by reading:*" where the good sense of the *practice*, is as conspicuous, as the ingenuity, so becoming the greatness of his character, in *confessing* it. For, when a writer, who, as we have seen, is driven by so many powerful motives to the imitation of preceding models, revolts against them all, and determines, at any rate, to be *original*, nothing can be expected but an aukward straining in every thing. *Improper method, forced conceits*, and *affected expression*, are the certain issue of such obstinacy. The business is to be *unlike*; and this he may very possibly be, but at the expence of graceful ease and true beauty. For he puts himself, at best, into a convulsed, unnatural state; and it is

[d] Mr. Pope's Preface to his Works.

well, if he be not forced, beside his purpose, to leave *common sense*, as well as his *model*, behind him. Like one who would break loose from an impediment, which holds him fast; the very endeavour to get clear of it throws him into *uneasy attitudes*, and *violent contorsions*; and, if he gain his liberty at last, it is by an *effort*, which carries him much further than the *point* he would wish to stop at.

And, that the reader may not suspect me of asserting this without experience, let me exemplify what has been here said in the case of a very eminent person, who, with all the advantages of art and nature that could be required to adorn the true poet, was ruined by this single error. The person I mean was Sir WILLIAM D'AVENANT; whose *Gondibert* will remain a perpetual monument of the mischiefs, which must ever arise from this affectation of originality in lettered and polite poets.

The great author, when he projected his plan of an heroic poem, was so far from intending to steer his course by *example*, that he sets out, in his preface, with upbraiding the followers of Homer, as a base and timorous

crew of *coasters*, who would not adventure to launch forth on the vast ocean of invention. For, speaking of this poet, he observes, "that, "as sea marks are chiefly used to coasters, "and serve not those who have the ambition "of discoverers, that love to sail in untried "seas; so he hath rather proved a guide for "those, whose satisfied wit will not venture "beyond the track of others; than to them, "who affect a new and remote way of thinking; "who esteem it a deficiency and meanness of "mind, to stay and depend upon the authority "of example[e]."

And, afterwards, he professedly makes his own merit to consist in "an endeavour to lead "truth through unfrequented and new ways, "and from the most remote shades; by repre- "senting nature, though not in an affected, "yet in an unusual dress[f]." These were the principles he went upon: let us now attend to the success of his endeavours.

The METHOD of his work is defective in many respects. To instance in the two following. Observing the large compass of the

[e] Pref. to GONDIBERT, p. 2. Lond. 1651, 4to.
[f] Ibid. p. 30.

ancient epic, for which he saw no cause in nature, and which, he supposed, had been followed merely from a blind deference to the authority of the first model, he resolved to construct an heroic poem on the narrower and, as he conceived, juster plan of the dramatic poets. And, because it was their practice, for the purpose of *raising the passions* by a close accelerated plot, and for the convenience of *representation*, to conclude their subject in *five acts*, he affects to restrain himself within the same limits. The event was, that, cutting himself off, by this means, from the opportunity of digressive ornaments, which contribute so much to the pomp of the epic poetry; and, what is more essential, from the advantage of the most gradual and circumstantiated narration, which gives an air of *truth and reality* to the fable, he failed in accomplishing the proper *end* of this poem, ADMIRATION; *produced* by a grandeur of design and variety of important incidents, and *sustained* by all the energy and minute particularity of description.

2. It was essential to the ancient epos to raise and exalt the fable by the intervention of *supernatural agency*. This, again, the poet mistook for the prejudice of the affected imitators of Homer, "who had so often led them

" into heaven and hell, till, by conversation " with gods and ghosts, they sometimes de- " prive us of those natural probabilities in " story, which are instructive to human life[g]." Here then he would needs be original; and so, by recording only the affairs of men, hath fairly omitted a necessary part of the epic plan, and that which, of all others, had given the greatest state and magnificence to its construction. Yet here, to do him justice, one thing deserves our commendation. It had been the way of the Italian romancers, who were at that time the best poets, to run very much into prodigy and enchantment. " Not only to " exceed the *work*, but also the *possibility* of " nature, they would have impenetrable armors, " inchanted castles, invulnerable bodies, iron " men, flying horses, and a thousand other " such things, which are easily feigned by " them that dare[h]." These conceits, he rightly saw, had too slender a foundation in the serious belief of his age to justify a relation of them. And had he only dropped these, his conduct had been without blame. But, as it is the weakness of human nature, the observation of this extreme determined him to the other, of

[g] Prof. to GONDIBERT, p. 3. Lond. 1651, 4to.
[h] Answer to the Preface, p. 81.

admitting nothing, however well established in the general opinion, that was *supernatural.*

And as here he did too much, so in another respect, it may be observed, he did too little. The romancers, before spoken of, had carried their notions of *gallantry* in ordinary life, as high, as they had done those of *preternatural agency,* in their marvellous fictions. Yet here this original genius, who was not to be held by the shackles of superstition, suffered himself to be entrapped in the silken net of *love and honour.* And so hath adopted, in his draught of *characters,* that elevation of sentiment which a change of manners could not but dispose the reader to regard as *fantastic* in the Gothic romance, at the same time that he rejected what had the truest grace in the ancient epic, a *sober intermixture of religion.*

The *execution* of his poem was answerable to the general *method.* His SENTIMENTS are frequently forced, and so tortured by an affectation of wit, that every stanza hath the air of an epigram. And the EXPRESSION, in which he cloaths them, is so quaint and figurative, as turns his description almost into a continued riddle.

Such was the effect of a studious affectation of *originality* in a writer, who, but for this

misconduct, had been in the first rank of our poets. His endeavour was to keep clear of the models, in which his youth had been instructed, and which he perfectly understood. And in this indeed he succeeded. But the success lost him the possession of, what his large soul appears to have been full of, a true and permanent glory; which hath ever arisen, and can only arise, from the unambitious simplicity of nature; *contemplated* in her own proper form, or, by *reflexion*, in the faithful mirror of those very models, he so much dreaded.

In short, from what hath been here advanced, and especially as confirmed by so uncommon an instance, I think myself entitled to come at once to this *general conclusion*, which they, who have a comprehensive view of the history of letters, in their several periods, and a just discernment to estimate their state in them, will hardly dispute with me, "that, though many "causes concur to produce a thorough degene-"racy of taste in any country; yet the *princi-"pal*, ever, is, THIS ANXIOUS DREAD OF IMITA-"TION IN POLITE AND CULTIVATED WRITERS."

And, if such be the case, among the other uses of this Essay, it may perhaps serve for a seasonable admonition to the poets of our time, to relinquish their vain hopes of *originality*,

and turn themselves to a stricter imitation of the best models. I say, a *seasonable admonition;* for the more polished a nation is, and the more generally these models are understood, the greater danger there is, as was now observed, of running into that worst of literary faults, *affectation.* But, to stimulate their endeavours to this practice, the judgment of the public should first be set right; and their readers prepared to place a just value upon it. In this respect, too, I would willingly contribute, in some small degree, to the service of letters. For the poet, whose object is *fame,* will always adapt himself to the humour of those, who confer it. And till the public taste be reduced, by sober criticism, to a just standard, strength of genius will only enable a writer to pervert it still further, by a too successful compliance with its vicious expectations.

A

DISSERTATION

ON

THE MARKS OF IMITATION.

DISSERTATION IV.

ON

THE MARKS OF IMITATION.

TO MR. MASON.

I HAVE said, in the discourse on POETICAL IMITATION, "that coincidencies of a certain "*kind*, and in a certain *degree*, cannot fail to "convict a writer of Imitation[a]." You are curious, my friend, to know what these *coincidencies* are, and have thought that an attempt to point them out would furnish an useful Supplement to what I have written on this subject. But the just execution of this design would require, besides a careful examination of the workings of the human mind, an exact

[a] P. 214.

scrutiny of the most original and most imitative writers. And, with all your partiality for me, can you, in earnest, think me capable of fulfilling the *first* of these conditions; Or, if I were, do you imagine that, at this time o' day, I can have the leisure to perform the *other*? My younger years, indeed, have been spent in turning over those authors which young men are most fond of; and among these I will not disown that the Poets of ancient and modern fame have had their full share in my affection. But you, who love me so well, would not wish me to pass more of my life in these flowery regions; which though you may yet wander in without offence, and the rather as you wander in them with so pure a mind and to so moral a purpose, there seems no decent pretence for me to loiter in them any longer.

Yet in saying this I would not be thought to assume that severe character; which, though sometimes the garb of reason, is oftner, believe, the mask of dulness, or of something worse. No, I am too sensible to the charms, nay to the uses of your profession, to affect a contempt for it. The great Roman said well, *Haec studia adolescentiam alunt; senectutem oblectant.* We make a full meal of them in our youth. And no philosophy requires so

perfect a mortification as that we should wholly abstain from them in our riper years. But should we invert the observation; and take this light food not as the refreshment only, but as the proper *nourishment* of Age; such a name as Cicero's, I am afraid, would be wanting, and not easily found, to justify the practice.

Let us own then, on a greater authority than His, "That every thing is beautiful in its "season." The Spring hath its *buds and blossoms:* But, as the year runs on, you are not displeased, perhaps, to see them fall off; and would certainly be disappointed not to find them, in due time, succeeded by those *mellow hangings,* the poet somewhere speaks of.

I could alledge still graver reasons. But I would only say, in one word, that your friend has had his share in these amusements. I may recollect with pleasure, but must never live over again

Pieriosque dies, et amantes carmina somnos.

Yet something, you insist, is to be done; and, if it amount to no more than a specimen or slight sketch, such as my memory, or the few

notes I have by me, would furnish, the design, you think, is not totally to be relinquished.

I understand the danger of gratifying you on these terms. Yet, whatever it be, I have no power to excuse myself from any attempt, by which, you tell me at least, I may be able to gratify you. I will do my best, then, to draw together such observations, as I have sometimes thought, in reading the poets, most material for the certain discovery of *Imitations*. And I address them to you, not only as you are the properest judge of the subject; you, who understand so well in what manner the Poets are us'd to imitate each other, and who yourself so finely imitate the best of them; But as I would give you this small proof of my affection, and have perhaps the ambition of publishing to the world in this way the entire friendship, that subsists between us.

You tell me I have not succeeded amiss in explaining the difficulty of detecting *Imitations*. The materials of poetry, you own, lie so much in common amongst all writers, and the several ways of employing them are so much under the controul of common sense, that writings will in many respects be similar,

where there is no thought or design of *Imitating*. I take advantage of this concession to conclude from it, That we can seldom pronounce with certainty of Imitations without some external proof to assist us in the discovery. You will understand me to mean by these *external proofs*, the previous knowledge we have, from considerations not respecting the *Nature* of the work itself, of the writer's *ability* or *inducements* to imitate. Our first enquiry, then, will be, concerning the *Age*, *Character*, and *Education* of the supposed Imitator.

We can determine with little certainty, how far the principal Greek writers have been indebted to Imitation. We trace the waters of Helicon no higher than to their source. And we acquiesce, with reason, in the device of the old painter, you know of, who somewhat rudely indeed, but not absurdly, drew the figure of Homer with a fountain streaming out of his mouth, and the other poets watering at it.

> Hither, as to their fountain, other Stars
> Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.

The Greek writers then were, or, for any thing we can say, might be Original.

But we can rarely affirm this of any other. And the reason is plain. When a taste for letters prevailed in any country, if it arose at first from the efforts of original thinking, it was immediately cherished and cultivated by the study of the old writers. You are too well acquainted with the progress of ancient and modern wit to doubt of this fact. Rome adorned itself in the spoils of Greece. And both assisted in dressing up the later European poetry. What else do you find in the Italian or French Wits, but the old matter, worked over again; only presented to us in a new form, and embellished perhaps with a conceit or two of mere modern invention?

But the English, you say, or rather your fondness for your Masters leads you to suppose, are original thinkers. 'Tis true, Nature has taken a pleasure to shew us what she could do, by the production of ONE Prodigy. But the rest are what we admire them for, not indeed without Genius, perhaps with a larger share of it than has fallen to the lot of others, yet directly and chiefly by the discipline of art and the helps of imitation.

The golden times of the English Poetry were, undoubtedly, the reigns of our two

Queens. Invention was at its height, in the *one*; and Correctness, in the *other*. In *both*, the manners of a court refin'd, without either breaking or corrupting the spirit of our poets. But do you forget that ELIZABETH read Greek and Latin almost as easily as our Professors? And can you doubt that what she knew so well, would be known, admired, and imitated by every other? Or say, that the writers of her time were, some of them, ignorant enough of the *learned* languages to be inventors; can you suppose, from what you know of the fashion of that age, that their fancies would not be sprinkled, and their wits refreshed by the essences of the Italian poetry?

I scarcely need say a word of our OTHER Queen, whose reign was unquestionably the æra of classic imitation and of classic taste. Even they, who had never been as far as Greece or Italy, to warm their imaginations or stock their memories, might do both to a tolerable degree in France; which, though it bowed to our country's arms, had almost the ascendant in point of letters.

I mention these things only to put you in mind that hardly *one* of our poets has been in a condition to do without, or certainly be above,

the suspicion of learned imitation. And the observation is so true, that even in this our age, when good letters, they say, are departing from us, the Greek or Roman stamp is still visible in every work of genius, that has taken with the public. Do you think one needed to be told in the title-page, that a late DRAMA, or some later ODES were formed on the ancient model?

The drift of all this, you will say, is to overturn the former discourse; for that now I pretend, every degree of likeness to a preceding writer is an argument of imitation. Rather, if you please, conclude that, in my opinion, every degree of likeness is exposed to the *suspicion* of imitation. To convert this suspicion into a proof, it is not enough to say, that a writer *might*, but that his circumstances make it plain or probable at least, that he *did*, imitate.

Of these *circumstances* then, the *first* I should think deserving our attention, is the AGE in which the writer lived. One should know if it were an age addicted to much study, and in which it was creditable for the best writers to make a shew of their reading. Such especially was the age succeeding to that me-

morable æra, the revival of letters in these western countries. The fashion of the time was to interweave as much of ancient wit as possible in every new work. Writers were so far from affecting to think and speak in their own way, that it was their pride to make the admired ancient think and speak for them. This humour continued very long, and in some sort even still continues: with this difference indeed, that, then, the ancients were introduced to do the honours, since, to do the drudgery of the entertainment. But several causes conspired to carry it to its height in England about the beginning of the last century. You may be sure, then, the writers of that period abound in imitations. The best poets boasted of them as their sovereign excellence. And you will easily credit, for instance, that B. Jonson was a servile imitator, when you find him on so many occasions little better than a painful translator.

I foresee the occasion I shall have, in the course of this letter, to weary you with citations: and would not therefore go out of my way for them. Yet, amidst a thousand instances of this sort in Jonson, the following, I fancy, will entertain you. The Latin verses, you know, are of Catullus.

Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis,
Ignotus pecori, nullo convulsus aratro,
Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educat imber,
Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ.
Idem, quum tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ.

It came in Jonson's way, in one of his masks, to translate this passage; and observe with what industry he has secured the sense, while the spirit of his author escapes him.

Look, how a flower that close in closes grows,
Hid from rude cattle, bruised with no plows,
Which th' air doth stroke, sun strengthen, show'rs shoot high'r,
It many youths, and many maids desire;
The same, when cropt by cruel hand, is wither'd,
No youths at all, no maidens have desir'd.

—It was not thus, you remember, that Ariosto and Pope have translated these fine verses. But to return to our purpose:

To this consideration of the *Age* of a writer, you may add, if you please, that of his EDUCATION. Though it might not, in general, be the fashion to affect learning, the habits acquired by a particular writer might dispose him to do so. What was less esteemed by the

enthusiasts of Milton's time (of which however he himself was one of the greatest) than prophane or indeed any kind of learning? Yet we, who know that his youth was spent in the study of the best writers in every language, want but little evidence to convince us that his great genius did not disdain to stoop to imitation. You assent, I dare say, to Dryden's compliment, though it be an invidious one, "That no man has so copiously translated "Homer's Grecisms, and the Latin elegancies "of Virgil." Nay, don't you remember, the other day, that we were half of a mind to give him up for a shameless plagiary, chiefly because we were sure he had been a great reader.

But no good writer, it will be said, has flourished out of a learned age, or at least without some tincture of learning. It may be so. Yet every writer is not disposed to make the most of these advantages. What if we pay some regard then to the CHARACTER of the writer? A poet, enamoured of himself, and who sets up for a great inventive genius, thinks much to profit by the sense of his predecessors, and even when he steals, takes care to dissemble his thefts, and to conceal them as much as possible. You know I have instanced in such a poet in Sir *William D'Avenant*. In detecting

the imitations of such a writer, one must then proceed with some caution. But what if our concern be with *one*, whose modesty leads him to revere the sense and even the expression of approved authors, whose taste enables him to select the finest passages in their works, and whose judgment determines him to make a free use of them? Suppose we know all this from common fame, and even from his own confession; would you scruple to call that an *imitation* in him, which in the other might have passed for *resemblance* only?

As the character is amiable, you will be pleased to hear me own, there are many modern poets to whom it belongs. Perhaps, the first that occurred to my thoughts was Mr. Addison. But the observation holds of others, and of *one*, in particular, very much his superior in true genius. I know not whether you agree with me, that the famous line in the *Essay on Man*;

" An honest man's the noblest work of God,

is taken from Plato's, Πάντων ἱερώτατόν ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀγαθός. But I am sure you will that the still more famous lines, which shallow men repeat without understanding,

" For modes of Faith let graceless zealots fight,
" His, can't be wrong whose life is in the
right:"

are but copied, though with vast improvement in the force and turn of expression, from the excellent and, let it be no disparagement to him to say, from the orthodox Mr. Cowley. The poet is speaking of his friend CRASHAW.

" His Faith perhaps in some nice tenets might
" Be wrong; his life, I'm sure, was in the
right."

Mr. Pope, who found himself in the same circumstances with Crashaw, and had suffered no doubt from the like uncharitable constructions of *graceless zeal*, was very naturally tempted to adopt this candid sentiment, and to give it the further heightening of his own spirited expression.

Let us see then how far we are got in this inquiry. We may say of the old Latin poets, that they all came out of the Greek schools. It is as true of the moderns in this part of the world, that they, in general, have had their breeding in both the Greek and Latin. But when the question is of any particular writer, how far and in what instances you may presume

on his being a professed imitator, much will depend on the certain knowledge you have of his *Age*, *Education*, and *Character*. When all these circumstances meet in one man, as they have done in others, but in none perhaps so eminently as in B. Jonson, wherever you find an acknowledged likeness, you will do him no injustice to call it *imitation*.

Yet all this, you say, comes very much short of what you require of me. You want me to specify those peculiar considerations, and even to reduce them into rule, from which one may be authorised in any instance to pronounce of imitations. It is not enough, you pretend, to say of any passage in a celebrated poet, that it most probably was taken from some other. In your extreme jealousy for the credit of your order, you call upon me to shew the distinct marks which convict him of this commerce.

In a word, You require me to turn to the poets; to gather a number of those passages I call Imitations; and to point to the *circumstances* in each that prove them to be so. I attend you with pleasure in this amusing search. It is not material, I suppose, that we observe any strict method in our ramblings. And yet we will not wholly neglect it.

Perhaps then we shall find undoubted marks of Imitation, both in the SENTIMENT, and EXPRESSION of great writers.

To begin with such considerations as are most GENERAL.

I. An identity of the *subject-matter* of poetry is no sure evidence of Imitation: and least of all, perhaps, in natural description. Yet where the *local* peculiarities of nature are to be described, there an exact conformity of the matter will evince an imitation.

Descriptive poets have ever been fond of lavishing all the riches of their fancy on the *Spring*. But the appearances of this *prime of the year* are so diversified with the climate, that descriptions of it, if taken directly from nature, must needs be very different. The Greek and Latin, and, since them, the Provencial poets, when they insist, as they always do, on the indulgent softness of this season, its *genial dews* and *fostering breezes*, speak nothing but what is agreeable to their own experience and feeling.

It ver; et Venus; et Veneris praenuntius antè
Pinnatus graditur Zephyrus vestigia propter:

Flora quibus mater praespergens antè viai
Cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.

Venus, or the spirit of love, is represented by those poets as brooding o'er this delicious season;

Rura foecundat voluptas: rura VENEREM sentiunt.
Ipsa gemmas purpurantem pingit annum floribus:
Ipsa surgentis papillas de Favonî spiritu
Urguet in toros tepentes; ipsa roris lucidi, &c.

and a great deal more to the same purpose, which every one recollects in the old classic and in the Provencial poets.

But when we hear this language from the more Northern, and particularly our English bards, who perhaps are shivering with the blasts of the North-east, at the very time their imagination would warm itself with these notions, one is certain this cannot be the effect of *observation*, but of a sportful fancy; enchanted by the native loveliness of these exotic images, and charmed by the secret insensible power of *imitation*.

And to shew the certainty of this conclusion, Shakespear, we may observe, who had none of

this classical or Provencial bias on his mind, always describes, not a Greek, or Italian, or Provencial, but an English Spring; where we meet with many unamiable characters; and, among the rest, instead of Zephyr or Favonius, we have the bleak North-east, that *nips the blooming infants of the Spring.*

But there are other obvious examples. In Cranmer's prophetic speech, at the end of HENRY VIII. when the poet makes him say of Queen Elizabeth, that,

" In her days ev'ry man shall eat with safety
" Under his own vine what he plants."

and of King James, that,

" He shall flourish,
" And, like a mountain Cedar, reach his
" branches
" To all the plains about him"—

It is easy to see that his *Vine* and *Cedar* are not of English growth, but transplanted from Judæa. I do not mention this as an impropriety in the poet, who, for the greater solemnity of his prediction, and even from a principle of decorum, makes his Arch-bishop fetch his imagery from Scripture. I only take notice of it as a certain argument that the imagery

was not his own, that is, not suggested by his own observation of nature.

The case you see, in these instances, is the same as if an English landskip-painter should choose to decorate his Scene with an Italian sky. The Connoisseur would say, he had copied this particular from Titian, and not from Nature. I presume then to give it for a certain note of Imitation, *when the properties of one clime are given to another.*

II. You will draw the same conclusion whenever you find "The Genius of one *people* "given to another."

1. Plautus gives us the following true picture of the Greek manners:

—In hominum aetate multa eveniunt hujusmodi—
Irae interveniunt, redeunt rursum in gratiam.
Verùm irae siquae fortè eveniunt hujusmodi,
Inter eos rursum si reventum in gratiam est,
Bis tanto amici sunt inter se, quàm prius.
AMPHYT. A. III. S. 2.

You are better acquainted with the modern Italian writers than I am; but if ever you find

any of them transferring this placability of temper into an eulogy of his countrymen, conclude without hesitation, that the sentiment is taken.

2. The late Editor of Jonson's works observes very well the impropriety of leaving a trait of Italian manners in his *Every man in his humour*, when he fitted up that Play with English characters. Had the scene been laid originally in England, and that *trait* been given us, it had convicted the poet of *Imitation*.

3. This attention to the genius of a people will sometimes shew you, that the *form* of composition, as well as particular sentiments, comes from Imitation. An instance occurs to me as I am writing. The Greeks, you know, were great haranguers. So were the ancient Romans, but in a less degree. One is not surprized therefore that their historians abound in set speeches; which, in their hands, become the finest parts of their works. But when you find modern writers indulging in this practice of speech-making, you may guess from what source the habit is derived. Would Machiavel, for instance, as little of a Scholar as, they say, he was, have adorned his fine

history of Florence with so many harangues, if the classical bias, imperceptibly, it may be, to himself, had not hung on his mind?

Another example is remarkable. You have sometimes wondered how it has come to pass that the moderns delight so much in *dialogue-writing*, and yet that so very few have succeeded in it. The proper answer to the first part of your enquiry will go some way towards giving you satisfaction as to the last. The practice is not original, has no foundation in the manners of modern times. It arose from the excellence of the Greek and Roman dialogues, which was the usual form in which the ancients chose to deliver their sentiments on any subject.

Still another instance comes in my way. How happened it, one may ask, that Sir Philip Sydney in his Arcadia, and afterwards Spenser in his Fairy Queen, observed so unnatural a conduct in those works; in which the Story proceeds, as it were, by snatches, and with continual interruptions? How was the good sense of those writers, so conversant besides in the best models of antiquity, seduced into this preposterous method? The answer, no

doubt, is, that they were copying the design, or disorder rather, of ARIOSTO, the favourite poet of that time.

III. Of near akin to this contrariety *to the genius of a people* is another mark which a careful reader will observe "in the representa-"tion of certain TENETS, different from those "which prevail in a writer's country or time."

1. We seldom are able to fasten an imitation, with certainty, on such a writer as Shakespear. Sometimes we are, but never to so much advantage as when he happens to forget himself in this respect. When Claudio, in *Measure for Measure*, pleads for his life in that famous speech,

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lye in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence about
The pendant world—

It is plain that these are not the Sentiments which any man entertained of *Death* in the

writer's age or in that of the speaker. We see in this passage a mixture of Christian and Pagan ideas; all of them very susceptible of poetical ornament, and conducive to the argument of the Scene; but such as Shakespear had never dreamt of but for Virgil's Platonic hell; where, as we read,

aliae panduntur inanes
Suspensae ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto,
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.
Virg. l. vi.

2. A prodigiously fine passage in Milton may furnish another example of this sort,

When Lust
By unchast looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of Sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
Ling'ring, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body, that it lov'd,
And linkt itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.
Mask at Ludlow Castle.

This philosophy of *imbruted souls* becoming *thick shadows* is so remote from any ideas entertained at present of the effects of Sin, and at the same time is so agreeable to the notions of Plato (a double favourite of Milton, for his own sake, and for the sake of his being a favourite with his Italian Masters), that there is not the least question of its being taken from the PHAEDO.

Ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεταί τε καὶ ἕλκεται πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον, φόβῳ τοῦ ἀειδοῦς τε καὶ ἅδου, περὶ τὰ μνήματα καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένη· περὶ ἃ δὴ καὶ ὤφθη ἄττα ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα, οἷα παρέχονται αἱ τοιαῦται ψυχαὶ εἴδωλα, αἱ μὴ καθαρῶς ἀπολυθεῖσαι ——

There is no wonder, now one sees the fountain Milton drew from, that, in admiration of this poetical philosophy (which nourished the fine spirits of that time, though it corrupted some), he should make the other speaker in the scene cry out, as in a fit of extasy,

How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns —

The very ideas which Lord SHAFTESBURY has

employed in his encomiums on the Platonic philosophy; and the very language which Dr. HENRY MORE would have used, if he had known to express himself so soberly.

3. Having said so much of Plato, whom the Italian writers have helped to make known to us, let me just observe one thing, to our present purpose, of those Italian writers themselves. One of their peculiarities, and almost the first that strikes us, is a certain sublime mystical air which runs through all their fictions. We find them a sort of philosophical fanatics, indulging themselves in strange conceits "concerning the *Soul*, the *chyming of* "*celestial orbs*, and presiding *Syrens*." One may tell by these marks, that they doted on the fancies of Plato; if we had not, besides, direct evidence for this conclusion. Tasso says of himself, and he applauds the same thing in Petrarch, "Lessi già tutte l'opere di "Platone, è mi rimassero molti semi nella "menta della sua dottrina." I take these words from Menage, who has much more to the same purpose, in his elegant observations on the *Amintas* of this poet.

One sees then where Milton had been for that imagery in the ARCADES,

then listen I
To the celestial Syrens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine enfolded spheres
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of Gods and men is wound.

The best comment on these verses is a passage in the xth Book of Plato's Republic, where this whole system, of *Syrens quiring to the fates*, is explained or rather delivered.

IV. We have seen a *Mark* of Imitation, in the allusion of writers to certain strange, and foreign tenets of philosophy. The observation may be extended to all those passages (which are innumerable in our poets) that allude to the *rites, customs, language, and theology of Paganism.*

It is true, indeed, this Species of Imitation is not that which is, properly, the subject of this Letter. The most original writer is allowed to furnish himself with poetical ideas from all quarters. And the management of learned *Allusion* is to be regarded, perhaps, as one of the nicest offices of Invention. Yet it may be useful to see from what sources a great poet derives his materials; and the rather, as

this detection will sometimes account for the *manner* in which he disposes of them. However, I will but detain you with a remark or two on this class of Imitations.

1. I observe, that even Shakespear himself abounds in learned Allusions. How he came by them, is another question; though not so difficult to be answered, you know, as some have imagined. They, who are in such astonishment at the learning of Shakespear, besides that they certainly carry the notion of his illiteracy too far, forget that the Pagan imagery was familiar to all the poets of his time—that abundance of this sort of learning was to be picked up from almost every English book, he could take into his hands—that many of the best writers in Greek and Latin had been translated into English—that his conversation lay among the most learned, that is, the most paganized poets of his age—but above all, that, if he had never looked into books, or conversed with bookish men, he might have learned almost all the secrets of paganism (so far, I mean, as a poet had any use of them) from the Masks of B. Jonson; contrived by that poet with so pedantical an exactness, that one is ready to take them for lectures and illustrations on the ancient learning, rather than

exercises of modern wit. The taste of the age, much devoted to erudition, and still more, the taste of the Princes, for whom he writ, gave a prodigious vogue to these unnatural exhibitions. And the knowledge of antiquity, requisite to succeed in them, was, I imagine, the reason that Shakespear was not over-fond to try his hand at these elaborate trifles. Once indeed he *did*, and with such success as to disgrace the very best things of this kind we find in Jonson. The short Mask in the *Tempest* is fitted up with a classical exactness. But its chief merit lies in the beauty of the *Shew*, and the richness of the *poetry*. Shakespear was so sensible of his Superiority, that he could not help exulting a little upon it, where he makes *Ferdinand* say,

> This is a most majestic *Vision*, and
> Harmonious charming *Lays*—

'Tis true, another Poet, who possessed a great part of Shakespear's genius and all Jonson's learning, has carried this courtly entertainment to its last perfection. But the *Mask at Ludlow Castle* was, in some measure, owing to the *fairy Scenes* of his Predecessor; who chose this province of *Tradition*, not only as most suitable to the wildness of his vast creative

imagination, but as the *safest* for his unlettered Muse to walk in. For here he had much, you know, to expect from the popular credulity, and nothing to fear from the classic superstition of that time.

2. It were endless to apply this *note* of imitation to other poets confessedly learned. Yet one instance is curious enough to be just mentioned.

Mr. Waller, in his famous poem on the victory over the Dutch on June 3, 1665, has the following lines;

His flight tow'rds heav'n th' aspiring BELGIAN took;
But fell, like PHAETON, with thunder strook:
From vaster hopes than his, he seem'd to fall,
That durst attempt the BRITISH Admiral:
From her broadsides a ruder flame is thrown,
Than from the fiery chariot of the Sun:
THAT, bears THE RADIANT ENSIGN OF THE DAY;
And SHE, the flag that governs in the Sea.

He is comparing the British Admiral's *Ship* to the *Chariot* of the Sun. You smile at the quaintness of the conceit, and the ridicule he falls into, in explaining it. But that is not the question at present. The *latter*, he says,

bears *the radiant ensign of the day:* The *other, the ensign of naval dominion.* We understand how properly the *English Flag* is here denominated. But what is that *other Ensign?* The *Sun* itself, it will be said. But who, in our days, ever expressed the Sun by such a periphrasis? The image is apparently antique, and easily explained by those who know that anciently the Sun was commonly emblematized by a *starry or radiate figure;* nay, that such a figure was placed aloft, as an *Ensign,* over the *Sun's charioteer,* as we may see in representations of this sort on ancient Gems and Medals.

From this original then Mr. Waller's imagery was certainly taken; and it is properly applied in this place where he is speaking of the *Chariot of the Sun,* and *Phaeton's fall* from it. But to remove all doubt in the case, we can even point to the very passage of a Pagan poet, which Mr. Waller had in his eye, or rather translated.

Propterea noctes hiberno tempore longæ
Cessant, dum veniat RADIATUM INSIGNE DIEI.
Lucr. l. v. 698.

Here, you see, the poet's allusion to a classic idea has led us to the discovery of the very

passage from which it was taken. And this use a learned reader will often make of the species of Imitation, here considered.

V. Great writers, you find, sometimes forget the character of the *Age*, they live in; the *principles*, and *notions* that belong to it. "Sometimes they forget *themselves*, that is, "their own situation and character." Another sign of the influence of *Imitation*.

1. When we see such men, as STRADA and MARIANA, writers of fine talents indeed, but of recluse lives and narrow observation, chusing to talk like men of the world, and abounding in the most refined conclusions of the cabinet, we are sure that this character, which we find so natural in a Cardinal DE RETZ, is but assumed by these Jesuits. And we are not surprized to discover, on examination, that their best reflexions are copied from TACITUS.

On the other hand, when a man of the world took it into his head, the other day, in a moping fit, to talk *Sentences*, every body concluded that this was not the language of the writer or his situation, but that he had been poaching in some pedant; perhaps in the *Stoical Fop*, he affected so much contempt of, SENECA.

2. Sometimes we catch a great writer deviating from his *natural manner*, and taking pains, as it were, to appear the very reverse of his proper *character*. Would you wish a stronger proof of his being seduced, at least for the time, by the charms of *imitation?*

Nothing is better known than the easy, elegant, agreeable vein of VOITURE. Yet you have read his famous Letter to BALZAC, and have been surprized, no doubt, at the forced, quaint, and puffy manner, in which it is written. The secret is, Voiture is aping Balzac from one end of this letter to the other. Whether to pay his court to him, or to laugh at him, or that perhaps, in the instant of writing, he really fancied an excellence in the style of that great man, is not easy to determine. An eminent French critic, I remember, is inclined to take it for a piece of mockery. At all events, we must needs esteem it an *imitation.*

3. This remark on the turn of a writer's *genius* may be further applied to that of his *temper or disposition.*

The natural misanthropy of Swift may account for his thinking and speaking very often

in the spirit of ROCHEFOUCAULT, without any thought of taking from his *Maxims*, though he was an admirer of them. But if at any time we observe so humane and benevolent a man as Mr. Pope giving into this language, we say of course, "This is not his own, but an "assumed manner."

Or what say you to an instance that exemplifies both these observations together? The natural unaffected turn of Mr. Cowley's manner, and the tender sensibility of his mind, are equally seen and loved in his prose-works, and in such of his poems as were written after a good model, or came from the heart. A clear sparkling fancy, softened with a shade of melancholy, made him, perhaps, of all our poets the most capable of excelling in the elegiac way, or of touching us in any way where a vein of easy language and moral sentiment is required. Who but laments then to see this fine genius perverted by the prevailing pedantry of his age, and carried away, against the bias of his nature, to an emulation of the rapturous, high-spirited Pindar?

I might give many more examples. But you will observe them in your own reading. I take the first that come to hand only to

explain my meaning, which is, "That if you find a course of sentiments or cast of composition different from that, to which the writer's *situation*, *genius*, or *complexion* would naturally lead him, you may well suspect him of imitation."

Still it may be, these considerations are rather too general. I come to others more particular and decisive.

VI. It may be difficult sometimes to determine whether a single sentiment or image be derived or not. But when we see a cluster of them in two writers, applied to the same subject, one can hardly doubt that one of them has copied from the other.

A celebrated French moralist makes the following reflexions. "Quelle chimere est-ce "donc que l'homme? Quelle nouveautè, "quel chaos, quel sujet de contradiction? "Juge de toutes choses, imbecile ver de terre; "depositaire du vrai, amas d'incertitude; gloire, "et rebut de l'univers."

Turn now to the *Essay on Man*, and tell me if Mr. Pope did not work up the following lines out of these reflexions.

" Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
" Still by himself abus'd or disabus'd;
" Created half to rise, and half to fall,
" Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
" Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
" The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.

2. This conclusion is still more certain, when, together with a general likeness of sentiments, we find the same *disposition* of the parts, especially if that disposition be in no common form.

" Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet
" With charm of earliest birds: pleasant the sun,
" When first on this delightful land he spreads
" His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flow'r,
" Glist'ring with dew"——

and the rest of that fine speech in the IVth Book of *Paradise Lost*, which you remember so perfectly that I need not transcribe more of it.

Milton's fancy, as usual, is rich and exuberant; but the conduct and application of his imagery shews, that the whole passage was

shadowed out of those charming but simpler lines in the DANAE of Euripides.

——φίλον μὲν φέγγος ἡλίου τόδε.
Καλὸν δὲ πόντου χεῦμ' ἰδεῖν εὐήνεμον,
Γῆ τ' ἠρινὸν θάλλουσα, πλεύσιόν θ' ὕδωρ,
Πολλῶν τ' ἔπαινόν ἐξί μοι λέξαι καλῶν.
Ἀλλ' ἐδὲν ἧτω λαμπρὸν, ἀδ' ἰδεῖν, καλὸν,
Ὡς τοῖς ἄπαισι, καὶ πόθῳ δεδηγμένοις,
Παίδων νεογνῶν ἐν δόμοις ἰδεῖν φάος.

VII. There is little doubt in such cases as these. There needs not perhaps be much in the case, sometimes, of *single* sentiments or images. As where we find "a sentiment or "image in two writers precisely the same, yet "new and unusual."

1. Thus we are told very reasonably, that *Milton's clust'ring locks* is the copy of Apollonius' ΗΛΟΚΑΜΟΙ ΒΟΤΡΥΟΕΝΤΕΣ. *Obs. on Spenser*, p. 80. For though the metaphor be a just one and very natural, yet there is perhaps no other authority for the use of it, but in these two poets. And Milton had certainly read Apollonius.

2. What the same critic observes of Milton's

——————— "And *curl* the grove
"In ringlets *quaint*"—

being taken from Jonson's

When was old Sherwood's head more *quaintly curl'd?*

is still more unquestionable. For here is a combination of signs to convict the former of imitation: Not only the *singularity of the image*, but the *identity of expression*, and, what I lay the most stress upon, the *boldness of the figure*, as employed by Milton. Jonson speaks of old Sherwood's *head*, as curl'd. Milton, as conscious of his authority, drops the preparatory idea, and says at once, The *grove* curl'd.

Let me add to these, two more instances from the same poet.

3. *Spenser* tells us of

A little *glooming light*, much like a shade.
F. Q. c. II. s. 14.

Can you imagine that Milton did not take his idea from hence, when he said, in his *Penseroso*,

—glowing embers thro' the room
Teach *light* to counterfeit a *gloom?*

4. Again, in his description of Paradise,

Flow'rs of all hues, and without thorn the rose.

Every poet of every time is lavish of his flowers on such occasions. But *the rose without thorn* is a rarity. And, though it was fine to imagine such an one in Paradise, could only be an Italian refinement. Tasso, you will think, is the original, when you have read the following lines;

Senza quei suoi pungenti ispidi dumi
Spiegò le foglie la purpurea Rosa.

5. Another instance, still more remarkable, may be taken from Mr. Pope. One of the most striking passages in the *Essay on Man* is the following,

Superior Beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And shew'd a NEWTON, as we shew an ape.
Ep. ii. v. 31.

Can you doubt, from the *singularity* of this sentiment, that the great poet had his eye on Plato? who makes Socrates say, in allusion to a remark of Heraclitus, Ὅτι ἀνθρώπων ὁ σοφώτατ' πρὸς θεὸν πίθηκος φανεῖται. *Hipp. Major.*

The application indeed is different. And it could not be otherwise. For the observation, which the Philosopher refers πρὸς θεὸν, is in the Poet given to *superior Beings* only. The consequence is, that the *Ape* is an object of *derision* in the former case, of *admiration*, in the latter.

To conclude this head, I will just observe to you, that, though the *same uncommon sentiment* in two *writers* be usually the effect of imitation, yet we cannot affirm this of *Actors* in real life. The reason is, when the situation of two men is the same, *Nature* will dictate the same sentiments more invariably than *Genius*. To give a remarkable instance of what I mean.

Tacitus relates, in the *first* book of his *Annals*, what passed in the senate on its first meeting after the death of Augustus. His politic successor carried it, for some time, with much apparent moderation. He wished, besides other reasons, to get himself solemnly recognized for Emperor by that Body, before he entered on the exercise of his new dignity. *Dabat famæ*, says the historian, *ut vocatus electusque potiùs à Republicâ videretur, quàm per uxorium ambitum et senili adoptione irrepsisse.* One of his courtiers would not be

wanting to himself on such an occasion. When therefore several motions had been made in the Senate, concerning the honours to be paid to the memory of their late Prince, VALERIUS MESSALLA moved RENOVANDUM PER ANNOS SACRAMENTUM IN NOMEN TIBERII; in other words, that the oath of allegiance should be taken to Tiberius. This was the very point that Tiberius drove at. And the consciousness of it made him suspect that this motion might be thought to proceed from himself. He therefore asked Messalla, "*Num, se mandante, eam* "*sententiam promsisset?*" His answer is in the following words. "Spontè *dixisse, re-* "*spondit; neque in iis, quæ ad rempublicam* "*pertinerent*, consilio nisi suo usurum, vel "cum periculo offensionis." *Ea*, concludes the historian, *sola species adulandi supererat.*

Now it is very remarkable, that we find in Ludlow's memoirs, one of Cromwell's officers, on the very same occasion, answering the Protector in the very same species of flattery.

Colonel WILLIAM JEPHSON moved in the House that Cromwell might be made King. Cromwell took occasion, soon after, to reprove the Colonel for this proposition, telling him, that he wondered what he could mean by it. To

which the other replied, " *That while he was permitted the honour of sitting in that House, he must desire the liberty to discharge his conscience, though his opinion should happen to displease.*"

Here we have a very striking coincidence of *sentiment,* without the least probability of imitation. For no body, I dare say, suspects Colonel William Jephson of stealing this refined stroke of adulation from Valerius Messalla. The truth is, the same situation, concurring with the same corrupt disposition, dictated this peculiar sentiment to the two courtiers. Yet, had these similar thoughts been found in two dramatic poets of the Augustan and Oliverian ages, we should probably have cried out, " An Imitation." And with good reason. For, besides the possibility of an Oliverian poet's knowing something of Tacitus, the speakers had then been *feigned,* not real personages. And it is not so likely that two such should agree in this sentiment: I mean, considering how new and particular it is. For, as to the more common and obvious sentiments, even dramatic speakers will very frequently employ the *same,* without affording any just reason to conclude that their prompters had turned plagiaries.

VIII. If to this singularity of a sentiment, you add the *apparent harshness* of it, especially when not gradually *prepared* (as such sentiments always will be by exact writers, when of their own proper invention), the suspicion grows still stronger. I just glanced at an instance of this sort in Milton's *curl'd* grove. But there are others still more remarkable. Shall I presume for once to take an instance from yourself?

Your fine Ode to Memory begins with these very lyrical verses:

Mother of Wisdom! Thou whose sway
The throng'd ideal hosts obey;
Who bidst their ranks now vanish, now appear,
Flame in the van, and darken in the rear.

This sublime imagery has a very original air. Yet I, who know how familiar the best ancient and modern critics are to you, have no doubt that it is taken from STRADA.

"Quid accommodatius, says he, speaking of your subject, Memory, quàm *simulachrorum ingentes copias,* tanquàm *addictam ubique tibi sacramento militiam,* eo inter se nexu ac fide conjunctam cohærentemque habere; ut sive

unumquodque separatim, sive confertim universa, sive singula ordinatim *in aciem proferre* velis; nihil planè in tantâ rerum herbâ turbetur, sed alia *procul atque in recessu* sita prodeuntibus locum cedant; alia, se tota confestim promant atque in medium *certò evocata prosiliant?* Hoc tam magno, tam fido domesticorum *agmine* instructus animus, &c."

Prol. Acad. I.

Common writers know little of the art of *preparing* their ideas, or believe the very name of an Ode absolves them from the care of art. But, if this uncommon sentiment had been intirely your own, you, I imagine, would have dropped some *leading* idea to introduce it.

IX. You see with what a suspicious eye, we who aspire to the name of critics, examine your writings. But every poet will not endure to be scrutinized so narrowly.

1. B. Jonson, in his Prologue to the *Sad Shepherd,* is opening the subject of that poem. The *sadness* of his shepherd is

For his lost Love, who in the TRENT is said
To have miscarried; *'las! what knows the head*
Of a calm river, whom the feet have drown'd!

The reflexion in this place is unnecessary and even impertinent. Who besides ever heard of the *feet* of a river? Of *arms*, we have. And so it stood in Jonson's original.

Greatest and fairest Empress, know you this,
Alas! no more than Thames' calm head doth know
Whose meads his arms drown, or whose corn o'erflow.

Dr. Donne.

The poet is speaking of the corruption of the courts of justice, and the allusion is perfectly fine and natural. Jonson was tempted to bring it into his prologue by the mere beauty of the sentiment. He had a river at his disposal, and would not let slip the opportunity. But "his unnatural use" of it detects his "imitation."

2. I don't know whether you have taken notice of a miscarriage, something like this, in the most judicious of all the poets.

Theocritus makes Polypheme say,

Καὶ γὰρ θὴν οὐδ' εἶδος ἔχω κακὸν, ὥς με λέγοντι,
Ἦ γὰρ πρὰν ἐς Πόντον ἐσέβλεπον· ἦν δὲ γαλάνα.

Nothing could be better fancied than to make this enormous son of Neptune use the sea for his looking-glass. But is Virgil so happy when his little land-man says,

Nec sum adeò informis: nuper me in littore vidi,
Cùm placidum ventis staret *mare*——

His wonderful judgment for once deserted him, or he might have retained the sentiment with a slight change in the application. For instance, what if he had said,

Certè ego me novi, liquidæque in imagine vidi
Nuper aquæ, placuitque mihi mea forma videnti.

It is a sort of curiosity, you say, to find Ovid reading a lesson to Virgil. I will dissemble nothing. The lines are, as I have cited them, in the 13th book of the Metamorphosis. But unluckily they are put into the mouth of Polypheme. So that instead of instructing one poet by the other, I only propose that they should make an exchange; Ovid take Virgil's *sea*, and Virgil be contented with Ovid's *water*. However this be, you may be

sure the authority of the Prince of the Latin poets will carry it with admiring posterity above all such scruples of decorum. Nobody wonders therefore to read in Tasso,

——————————— Non son' io
Da disprezzar, se ben me stesso vidi
Nel liquido del mar, quando l'altr' hieri
Taceano i venti, et ei giacea senz' onda.

But of all the misappliers of this fine original sentiment, commend me to that *other* Italian, who made his shepherd survey himself, in a *fountain* indeed, but a fountain of his own weeping.

3. You will forgive my adding one other instance " of this vicious application of a fine " thought."

You remember those agreeable verses of Sir *John Suckling*,

" Tempests of winds thus (as my storms of grief
Carry my tears which should relieve my heart)
Have hurried to the thankless ocean clouds
And show'rs, that needed not at all the courtesy.

When the poor plains have languish'd for the
want,
And almost burnt asunder."——
Brennoralt. A. III. S. 1.

I don't stay to examine how far the fancy of *tears relieving the heart* is allowable. But admitting the propriety of the observation, in the sense the poet intended it, the simile is applied and expressed with the utmost beauty. It accordingly struck the best writers of that time. SPRAT, in his history of the *Royal Society*, is taking notice of the misapplication of philosophy to subjects of Religion. "That "shower, says he, has done very much injury "by falling on the sea, for which the shep- "herd, and the ploughman, called in vain: "The wit of men has been profusely poured "out on *Religion*, which needed not its help, "and which was only thereby made more "tempestuous: while it might have been more "fruitfully spent, on some parts of *philosophy*, "which have been hitherto barren, and might "soon have been made fertile." *p.* 25.

You see what wire-drawing here is to make the comparison, so proper in its original use, just and pertinent to a subject to which it had

naturally no relation. Besides, there is an absurdity in speaking of a shower's doing *injury* to the sea by falling into it. But the thing illustrated by this comparison requiring the idea of *injury*, he transfers the idea to the comparing thing. He would soften the absurdity, by running the comparison into metaphorical expression, but, I think, it does not remove it. In short, for these reasons, one might easily have inferred an Imitation, without that parenthesis to apologize for it—"To "use that metaphor which an excellent poet of "our nation turns to *another* purpose—"

But a poet of that time has no better success in the management of this metaphor, than the Historian.

Love makes so many hearts the prize
Of the bright Carlisle's conqu'ring eyes;
Which she regards no more, than they
The tears of lesser beauties weigh.
So have I seen the lost clouds pour
Into the Sea an useless show'r;
And the vex'd Sailors curse the rain,
For which poor Shepherds pray'd in vain.
Waller's Poems, p. 25.

The Sentiment stands thus: "She regards "the captive *hearts* of others no more than

" those others—the *tears* of lesser beauties." Thus, with much difficulty, we get to *tears*. And when we have them, the allusion to *lost clouds* is so strained (besides that he makes his shower both *useless* and *injurious)*, that one readily perceives the poet's thought was distorted by *imitation*.

X. The charge of Plagiarism is so disreputable to a great writer that one is not surprized to find him anxious to avoid the imputation of it. Yet " this very anxiety serves, " sometimes, to fix it upon him."

Mr. Dryden, in the Preface to his translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting, makes the following observation on Virgil: " He pretends " sometimes to trip, but 'tis only to make you " think him in danger of a fall when he is " most secure. Like a skilful dancer on the " Rope (if you will pardon the meanness of " the similitude) who slips willingly and makes " a seeming stumble, that you may think him " in great hazard of breaking his neck; while " at the same time he is only giving you a " proof of his dexterity. My late Lord Ros- " common was often pleased with this reflexion, " &c." p. 50.

His apology for the use of this simile, and his concluding with Lord Roscommon's satisfaction at his remark, betray, I think, an anxiety to pass for original, under the consciousness of being but an imitator. So that if we were to meet with a passage, very like this, in a celebrated ancient, we could hardly doubt of its being copied by Mr. Dryden. What think you then of this observation in one of Pliny's Letters, "Ut quasdam artes, "ità eloquentiam nihil magis quàm ancipitia "commendant. Vides qui fune in summa "nituntur, quantos soleant excitare clamores, "cùm jam jamque casuri videntur." L. ix. Ep. 26.

Prior, one may observe, has acted more naturally in his *Alma*, and by so doing, though the resemblance be full as great, one is not so certain of his being an Imitator. The verses are, of Butler:

He perfect Dancer climbs the Rope,
And balances your fear and hope:
If after some distinguish'd leap,
He drops his Pole and seems to slip;
Strait gath'ring all his active strength
He rises higher half his length.

With *wonder* you approve his slight,
And owe your pleasure to your *fright*.
C. II.

Though the two last lines seem taken from the application of this similitude in Pliny, "Sunt enim maximè *mirabilia*, quæ maximè "inexpectata, et maximè *periculosa*."

XI. Writers are, sometimes, sollicitous to conceal themselves: At others, they are fond to proclaim their Imitation. "It is when "they have a mind to shew their dexterity in "contending with a great original."

You remember these lines of Milton in his Comus,

Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.

On which Dr. Warburton has the following note. "Mr. Pope has imitated this thought

and (as was always his way when he imitated) improved it.

" Bear me, some Gods! oh, quickly bear me
" hence
" To wholesome Solitude, the nurse of Sense;
" Where Contemplation prunes her ruffled
" wings,
" And the free Soul looks down to pity Kings.

" Mr. Pope has not only improved the har-
" mony, but the sense. In Milton, *Contem-*
" *plation* is called the *Nurse*; in Pope, more
" properly *Solitude*: In Milton, *Wisdom* is
" said to *prune* her wings; in Pope, *Contem-*
" *plation* is said to do it, and with much greater
" propriety, as she is of a *soaring* nature, and
" on that account is called by Milton himself,
" the *Cherub Contemplation*."

One sees that Mr. Pope's view was to surpass his original; " which, it is said, was always his " way when he imitated." The meaning is, when he purposely and professedly bent himself to Imitation; for then his fine genius taught him to seize every beauty, and his wonderful judgment, to avoid every defect or impropriety, in his author. And this distinction is very material to our passing a right judgment on the merit of Imitators. It is

commonly said, that their imitations fall short of their originals. And they will do so, whatever the Genius of the Imitator be, if they are formed only on a *general* resemblance of the thought imitated. For an Inventor comprehends his own idea more distinctly and fully, and of course expresses his purpose better, than a casual Imitator. But the case is different, when a good writer *studies* the passage from which he borrows. For then he not only copies, but improves on the first idea; and thus there will frequently (as in the case of Pope) be greater merit in the Copyist, than the original.

XII. We sometimes catch an Imitation lurking "in a licentious Paraphrase." The ground of suspicion lies in the very complacency with which a writer expatiates on a borrowed sentiment. He is usually more reserved in adorning one of his own.

1. Aurelius Victor observes of Fabricius, "quòd difficiliùs ab honestate, quàm Sol à suo "cursu, averti posset."

Tasso flourishes a little on this thought;

Prima dal corso distornar la Luna
E le stelle potrà, che dal diritto

Torcere un sol mio passo—

C. x. S. 24.

Mr. Waller rises upon the Italian,

" where her love was due,
So fast, so faithful, loyal, and so true,
That a bold hand as soon might hope to force
The rowling lights of heav'n, as change her course."

On the Death of Lady Rich.

But Mr. Cowley, knowing what authority he had for the general sentiment, gives the reins to his fancy and wantons upon it without measure.

Virtue was thy Life's centre, and from thence
Did silently and constantly dispense
The gentle vigorous influence
To all the wide and fair circumference:
And all the parts upon it lean'd so easilie,
Obey'd the mighty force so willinglie,
That none could discord or disorder see
In all their contrarietie.
Each had his motion natural and free,
And the whole no more mov'd, than the whole world could be.

Brutus,

2. The ingenious author of the *Observations on Spenser* (from which fine specimen of his critical talents one is led to expect great things) directs us to another imitation of this sort.

Tasso had said,

Cosi a le belle lagrime le piume
Si bagna Amore, e gode al chiaro lume.

On which short hint Spenser has raised the following luxuriant imagery,

The blinded archer-boy,
Like lark in show'r of rain,
Sate bathing of his wings,
And glad the time did spend
Under those crystal drops,
Which fall from her fair eyes,
And at their brightest beams
Him proyn'd in lovely wise.

3. I will just add two more examples of the same kind; chiefly, because they illustrate an observation, very proper to be attended to on this subject; which is, "That in this display "of a borrowed thought, the Imitation will "generally fall short of the Original, even "though the borrower be the greater Ge-"nius."

The Italian poet, just now quoted, says sublimely of the *Night*,

—Usci la Notte, è sotto l'ali
Menò il silentio—

C. v. S. 79.

Milton has given a paraphrase of this passage, but very much below his original,

Now came still ev'ning on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompany'd—

The striking part of Tasso's picture, is, "*Night's bringing in Silence under her wings.*" So new and singular an idea as this had detected an Imitation. Milton contents himself, then, with saying simply, *Silence accompany'd.* However, to make amends, as he thought, for this defect, *Night itself*, which the Italian had merely personized, the English poet not only *personizes*, but employs in a very becoming office:

Now came still ev'ning on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad.

Every body will observe a little blemish, in this fine couplet. He should not have used

the epithet *still*, when he intended to add,

Silence accompanied—

But there is a worse fault in this *Imitation*. To hide it, he speaks of *Night's livery*. When he had done that, to speak of her *wings*, had been ungraceful. Therefore he is forced to say obscurely as well as *simply*, *Silence accompany'd*: And so loses a more noble image for a less noble one. The truth is, they would not stand together. *Livery* belongs to *human grandeur*; *wings* to *divine* or *celestial*. So that in Milton's very attempt to surpass his original, he put it out of his power to employ the *circumstance* that most recommended it.

He is not happier on another occasion. Spenser had said with his usual simplicity,

" Virtue gives herself light thro' darkness for
" to wade."

F. Q. B. 1.

Milton catched at this image, and has run it into a sort of paraphrase, in those fine lines,

" Virtue could see to do what virtue would
" By her own radiant light, tho' Sun and Moon
" Were in the flat sea sunk—

COMUS.

In Spenser's line we have the idea of Virtue dropt down into a world, all over darkened with vice and error. Virtue excites the light of truth to see all around her, and not only dissipate the neighbouring darkness, but to direct her course in pursuing her victory and driving her enemy out of it; the arduousness of which exploit is well expressed by—*thro' darkness for to* WADE. On the contrary, Milton, in borrowing, substitutes the physical for the moral idea—*by her own radiant light*—and *tho' Sun and Moon were in the flat sea sunk*. It may be asked, how this happened? Very naturally. Milton was caught with the obvious *imagery*, which he found he could display to more advantage; and so did not enough attend to the noble *sentiment* that was couched under it.

XIII. These are instances of a paraphrastical licence in dilating on a famous Sentiment or Image. The *ground* is the same, only flourished upon by the genius of the Imitator. At times we find him practising a different art; "not merely spreading, as it were, and laying "open the same sentiment, but *adding* to it, "and by a new and studied device improving "upon it." In this case we naturally conclude that the refinement had not been made, if the

plain and simple thought had not preceded and given rise to it. You will apprehend my meaning by what follows.

1. Shakespear had said of Henry IVth,

—He cannot long hold out these pangs;
The incessant care and labour of his mind
Hath wrought the mure, that should confine it in,
So thin, that life looks through, and will break out.

HEN. IV. A. 4.

You have, here, the thought in its first simplicity. It was not unnatural, after speaking of the body, as a case or tenement of the Soul, *the mure that confines* it, to say, that as that case wears away and grows thin, life looks through, and is ready to break out.

DANIEL, by refining on this sentiment, if by nothing else, shews himself to be the copyist. Speaking of the same Henry, he observes,

And Pain and Grief, inforcing more and more,
Besieg'd the hold that could not long defend;
Consuming so all the resisting store
Of those provisions Nature deign'd to lend,

As that the Walls, worn thin, permit the
mind
To look out thorough, and his frailty find.

Here we see, not simply that *Life* is going to break through the infirm and much-worn habitation, but that the *Mind* looks through and *finds* his frailty, that it discovers, that Life will soon make his escape. I might add, that the four first lines are of the nature of the *Paraphrase*, considered in the last article: And that the *expression* of the others is too much the same to be original. But we are not yet come to the head of *expression*. And I choose to confine myself to the single point of view we have before us.

Daniel's improvement, then, looks like the artifice of a man that would outdo his Master. Though he fails in the attempt: for his ingenuity betrays him into a false thought. The mind, looking through, does not find *its own frailty*, but the frailty of the *building* it inhabits. However, I have endeavoured to rectify this mistake in my explanation.

The truth is, Daniel was not a man to improve upon Shakespear. But now comes a writer, that knew his business much better.

He chuses to employ this well-worn image, or rather to alter it a little and then employ it, for the conveyance of a very new fancy. If the mind could look through a *thin* body, much more one that was *cracked* and battered. And if it be for looking through at all, he will have it look to good purpose, and find, not its frailty only, but much other useful knowledge.

The lines are Mr. Waller's, and in the best manner of that very *refined* writer.

Stronger by weakness, *wiser*, men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
The Soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made.

2. After all, these conceits, I doubt, are not much to your taste. The instance I am going to give, will afford you more pleasure. Is there a passage in Milton you read with more admiration, than this in the *Penseroso?*

Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy stream;
Of lively portraiture display'd
Softly on my eye-lids laid.

Would you think it possible now that the ground-work of this fine imagery should be laid in a passage of Ben Jonson? Yet so we read, or seem to read, in his *Vision of Delight*.

Break, Phant'sy, from thy cave of cloud,
And spread thy purple wings:
Create of airy forms a stream,
And tho' it be a waking dream,
Yet let it like an odour rise
To all the senses here,
And fall like sleep upon their eyes
Or musick in their ear.

It is a delicate matter to analyze such passages as these; which, how exquisite soever in the poetry, when estimated by the *fine phrenzy* of a Genius, hardly look like sense when given in plain prose. But if you give me leave to take them in pieces, I will do it, at least, with reverence. We find then, that *Fancy* is here employed in one of her nicest operations, the production of a *day-dream*; which both poets represent as an *airy form*, or forms *streaming* in the air, gently falling on the eye-lids of her entranced votary. So far their imagery agrees. But now comes the *mark* of imitation I would point out to you. Milton carries the idea still further, and improves

finely upon it, in the *conception* as well as expression. Jonson evokes fancy out of her *cave of cloud*, those cells of the mind, as it were, in which during her intervals of rest, and when unemploy'd, fancy lies hid; and bids her, like a Magician, *create* this stream of forms. All this is just and truly poetical. But Milton goes further. He employs the *dewy-feather'd sleep* as his Minister in this machinery. And the mysterious day-dream is seen *waving at his wings in airy stream.* Jonson would have Fancy *immediately* produce this Dream. Milton more poetically, because in more distinct and particular imagery, represents Fancy as doing her work by means of *sleep;* that soft composure of the mind abstracted from outward objects, in which it yields to these phantastic impressions.

You see then a wonderful improvement in this addition to the original thought. And the notion of *dreams waving at the wings of sleep* is, by the way, further justified by what Virgil feigns of their *sticking* or rather fluttering on the leaves of his magic tree in the infernal regions. But it is curious to observe how this improvement itself arose from hints suggested by his original. From Jonson's dream, *falling, like sleep upon their eyes,* Milton took

his *feather'd sleep,* which he impersonates so properly; And from *Phant'sy's spreading her purple wings,* a circumstance, not so immediately connected with Jonson's design *of creating of airy forms a stream,* he catched the idea of *Sleep spreading her wings,* and to good purpose, since the airy stream of forms was to *wave at them.*

However, Jonson's image is, in itself, incomparable. It is taken from a *winged* insect breaking out of its Aurelia state, its *cave of cloud,* as it is finely called: Not unlike that of Mr. Pope,

So spins the Silk-worm small its slender store,
And labours till it *clouds* itself all o'er.

IV. *Dunc.* v. 253.

And nothing can be juster than this allusion. For the ancients always pictured FANCY and HUMAN-LOVE with Insect's wings.

XIV. Thus then, whether the poet *prevaricates, enlarges,* or *adds,* still we frequently find some latent circumstance, attending his management, that convicts him of Imitation. Nay, he is not safe even when he denies himself these liberties; I mean when he only *glances* at his original. "For, in this case,

" the borrowed sentiment usually wants some-
" thing of that perspicuity which always at-
" tends the first delivery of it." This Rule may be considered as the Reverse of the *last*. A writer, sometimes, takes a pleasure to *refine* on a plain thought: Sometimes (and that is usually when the original sentiment is well known and fully developed) he does not so much as attempt to open and *explain* it.

A poet of the last age has the following lines, on the subject of *Religion:*

Religion now is a young Mistress here,
For which each man will fight, and dye at least;
Let it alone awhile, and 't will become
A kind of married wife; people will be
Content to live with it in quietness.

Suckling says this in his Tragedy of Brennoralt; which is a Satire throughout on the rising troubles of that time. Butler has taken the thought and applied it on the same occasion:

When hard words, jealousies, and fears
Set folks together by the ears,
And make them fight, like mad or drunk,
For dame Religion, as for Punk.

Setting aside the difference between the burlesque and serious style, one easily sees that this sentiment is borrowed from Suckling. It has not the clear and full exposition of an original thought. Butler only represents men as drunk with Religion and fighting for it as for a Punk. The *other* gives the reason of the Debauch, namely, *fondness for a new face*; and tells us, besides, how things would subside into peace or indifference on a nearer and more familiar acquaintance. One could expect no less from the *Inventor* of this humorous thought; a *Borrower* might be content to allude to it.

XV. This last consideration puts me in mind of another artifice to conceal a borrowed sentiment. Nothing lies more open to discovery than a Simile in form, especially if it be a remarkable one. These are a sort of *purpurei panni* which catch all eyes; and, if the comparison be not a writer's own, he is almost sure to be detected. The way then that refined Imitators take to conceal themselves, in such a case, is to run the Similitude into Allegory. We have a curious instance in Mr. Pope, who has succeeded so well in the attempt, that his plagiarism, I believe, has never been suspected.

The verses, I have in my eye, are these fine ones, addressed to Lord Bolingbroke,

Oh, while along the stream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all it's fame,
Say, shall my little Bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph, and partake the Gale?

What think you, now, of these admired verses? Are they, besides their other beauties, perfectly original? You will be able to resolve this question, by turning to the following passage in a Poet, Mr. Pope was once fond of, I mean STATIUS,

Sic ubi magna novum Phario de litore puppis
Solvit iter, jamque innumeros utrinque rudentes
Lataque veliferi porrexit brachia mali
Invasitque vias, in eodem angusta phaselus
Æquore, et immensi partem sibi vendicat Austri. SILV. l. V. I. v. 242.

But, especially, this other,

—immensæ veluti CONNEXA carinæ
CYMBA MINOR, cum sævit hyems, pro parte, furentes
Parva receptat aquas, et EODEM VOLVITUR AUSTRO.
SILV. l. I. iv. v. 120.

XVI. I release you from this head of *Sentiments*, with observing that we sometimes conclude a writer to have had a celebrated original in his eye, when " without copying the " peculiar thought, or stroke of imagery, he " gives us only a copy of the impression, it " had made upon him."

1. In delivering this rule, I will not dissemble that I myself am copying, or rather stealing from a great critic: From *one*, however, who will not resent this theft; as indeed he has no reason, for he is so prodigiously rich in these things, as in others of more value, that what he neglects or flings away, would make the fortune of an ordinary writer. The person I mean is the late Editor of Shakespear, who, in an admirable note on Julius Cæsar, taking occasion to quote that passage of Cato,

O think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots, and their last fatal periods,
Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all, and big with death,

observes " that Mr. Addison was so struck and " affected with the *terrible graces* of Shake- " spear (in the passage he is there considering) " that, instead of imitating his author's senti- " ments, he hath, before he was aware, given

" us only the copy of his own impressions " made by them. For,

Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all, and big with death,

" are but the affections raised by such forcible " images as these,

——————— All the Int'rim is
Like a Phantasma, or a hideous dream
——————— The state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an Insurrection."

The observation is new and finely applied. Give me leave to suppose that the following is an instance of the same nature.

2. Milton on a certain occasion says of *Death*, that she

" Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile—
P. L. B. II. v. 846.

This representation is supposed by his learned Editor to be taken from Homer, from Statius, or from the Italian poets. A certain friend of ours, not to be named without honour, and therefore not at all on so slight an

occasion, suggests that it might probably be copied from Spenser's,

Grinning griesly—

B. V. c. 12.

And there is the more likelihood in this conjecture, as the poet a little before had call'd *death—the griesly terror*—v. 704. But after all, if he had any preceding writer in view, I suspect it might be FLETCHER; who, in his *Wife for a Month*, has these remarkable lines,

The game of Death was never play'd more nobly,
The meagre thief grew *wanton* in his mischiefs,
And *his shrunk hollow eyes smil'd* on his ruin.

The word *Ghastly*, I would observe, gives the precise idea of *shrunk hollow eyes*, and looks as if Milton, in admiration of his original, had only looked out for an *epithet* to Death's smile, as he found it pictured in Fletcher.

THUS MUCH, then, may perhaps serve for an illustration of the first part of this Inquiry. We have found out several *marks*, and applied them to various passages in the best writers, from which we may reasonably enough be

allowed to infer an Imitation in point of *Sentiment*. For what respects the other part of *Expression*, this is an easier task, and will be dispatched in few words.

Only you will indulge me in an observation or two, to prevent your expecting from me more than I undertake to perform.

When I speak of *Expression*, then I mean to confine myself "to single words or sentences, or at most the structure of a passage." When *Imitation* is carried so far as to affect the general cast of language, or what we call a *Style*, no great sagacity is, perhaps, required to detect it. Thus the *Ciceroniani*, if they were not ambitious of proclaiming themselves, are discoverable at the first glance. And the later Roman poets, as well as the modern Latin versifiers, are, to the best of their power, *Virgilian*. The thing is perhaps still easier in a living language; especially if that language be our own. Milton and Pope, if they have made but few poets, have made many imitators; so many, that we are ready to complain there is hardly an original poet left.

Another point seems of no importance in the present inquiry. I know, it is asked, How

far a writer casually or designedly imitates? that is, whether he copies another from memory only, without recollecting, at the time, the passage from which his expression is drawn, or purposely, and with full knowledge of his original. And this consideration is of much weight, as I have shewn at large, where the question is concerning the *credit* of the supposed imitator. For this is affected by nothing but direct and *intended* imitation. But as we are looking at present only for those marks in the expression which shew it *not* to be original, it is enough that the resemblance is such as cannot well be accounted for but on the supposition of some sort of commerce; whether immediately perceived by the writer himself, is not material. 'Tis true, this observation is applicable to *sentiments* as well as expression; and I have not pretended to give the preceding articles, as proofs, or even presumptions, in all cases, that the later writer copied intentionally from a former. But there is this difference in the two cases. *Sentiments* may be strikingly similar, or even identical, without the least thought, or even effect, of a preceding original. But the identity of *expression*, except in some few cases of no importance, is, in the same language, where the writer speaks

entirely from himself, an almost impossible thing. And you will be of this mind, if you reflect on the infinitely varied lights in which the same image or sentiment presents itself to different writers; the infinitely varied purpose they have to serve by it; or where it happens to strike precisely in the same manner, and is directed precisely to the same end, the infinite combinations of words in which it may be expressed. To all which you may add, that the least imaginable variation, either in the terms or the structure of them, not only destroys the identity, but often disfigures the resemblance to that degree that we hardly know it to be a resemblance.

So that you see, the *marks* of imitated or, if you will, *derived expression* are much less equivocal, than of *sentiment*. We may pronounce of the *former* without hesitation, that it is taken, when corresponding marks in the *latter* would only authorise us to conclude that it was the *same* or perhaps *similar*.

I need not use more words to convince you, that the distinction of *casual* and *design'd* imitation is still of less significancy in this class of imitations, than the other.

And with this preamble, more particular perhaps and circumstantial than was necessary, I now proceed to lay before you some of those *signs* of derived expression, which I conceive to be *unequivocal*. If they are so, they will generally appear at first sight; so that I shall have little occasion to trouble you, as I did before, with my comments. It will be sufficient to deliver the *rule*, and to *exemplify* it.

I. An identity of expression, especially if carried on through an intire sentence, is the most certain proof of imitation.

Mr. Waller of Sacharissa,

So little care of what is done below
Hath the bright dame, whom heav'n affecteth so;
Paints her, 'tis true, with the same hand which spreads
Like glorious colours thro' the flow'ry meads;
When lavish nature with her best attire
Cloaths the gay spring, the season of desire.

Mr. Fenton takes notice that the poet is copying from the *Muiopotmos* of Spenser,

To the gay gardens his unstaid desire
Him wholly carried to refresh his sprights:

There lavish Nature, in her best attire,
Pours forth sweet odours and alluring sights.

We shall see presently that, besides the identity of expression, there is also another mark of imitation in this passage.

II. But less than this will do, where the similarity of thought, and application of it, is striking.

Mr. Pope says divinely well,

Shall burning Ætna, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder and recall its fires?
On *air* or sea *new motions be impress'd,*
Oh blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast?
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall *gravitation cease if you go by?*
Or some old temple nodding to its fall
For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?
Essay IV. v. 123.

Now turn to Mr. Wollaston, an easy natural writer (where his natural manner is not stiffened by a mathematical pedantry) and abounding in fine sallies of the imagination; and see if the poet did not catch his *expression,* as well

as the fire of his conception in this place, from the philosopher:

"As to the course of Nature, if a good man be passing by an infirm building, just in the article of falling, can it be expected that God should *suspend the force of gravitation till he is gone by*, in order to his deliverance; or can we think it would be increased, and the fall hastened, if a bad man was there, only that he might be caught, crushed, and made an example? If a man's safety or prosperity should depend upon winds or rains, must *new motions be impressed upon the atmosphere*, and new directions given to the floating parts of it, by some extraordinary and new influence from God?"

III. Sometimes the original expression is not taken but paraphrased; and the writer disguises himself in a kind of circumlocution. Yet this artifice does not conceal him, especially if some fragments, as it were, of the inventor's phrase are found dispersedly in the imitation.

For in the secret of her troubled thought
A doubtful combat love and honour fought.
Fairfax's Tasso, B. IV. S. 70.

Hence Mr. Waller,

> There public care and private passion *fought*
> *A doubtful combat* in his noble *thought*.
> *Poems*, p. 14.

Public care is the periphrasis of *honour*, and *private passion*, of *love*. For the rest you see —*disjecti membra poetæ*.

IV. An imitation is discoverable, when there is but the least particle of the original expression, "by a peculiar and no very natural arrangement of words."

In Fletcher's *faithful Shepherdess*, the speaker says,

> ——————— In thy face
> Shines more awful majesty,
> Than dull weak mortality
> Dare with misty eyes behold,
> And live—

The writer glanced, but very improperly on such an occasion, at *Exod.* xxxiii. 20. "Thou "canst not see my face: for there shall no man "see me, *and live*."

V. An uncommon *construction* of words not identical, especially if the subject be the

same, or the ideas similar, will look like imitation.

Milton says finely of the *Swan*,

——————— The Swan with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly rows
Her state—

I should think he might probably have that line of Fletcher in his head,

How like a Swan she SWIMS HER PACE!

The expression, you see, is very like. 'Tis true, the *image* in Milton is much nobler. It is taken from a barge of state in a public procession.

VI. We may even pronounce that a *single word* is taken, when it is new and uncommon.

Milton's calling a ray of light—a levell'd *rule* in Comus v. 340, is so particular that, when one reads in Euripides ἡλίᾳ ΚΑΝΩΝ σαφὴς, Suppl. v. 650, one has no doubt that the learned poet translated the Greek word.

Again, Mr. Pope's,

"Or ravish'd with the *whistling* of a name,"

is for the same reason, if there were no other points of likeness, copied from Mr. Cowley's

" Charm'd with the foolish *whistlings* of a name."
Transl. of Virgil's *O! fortunati nimium*, &c.

VII. An improper *use* of uncommon expression, in very exact writers, will sometimes create a suspicion. Milton had called the *sight* indifferently *visual nerve* and *visual ray*, P. L. iii. 620. xi. 415. Mr. Pope in his Messiah thought he might take the same liberty, but forgot that though the *visual nerve* might be purged from film, the *visual ray* could not. Had Mr. Pope *invented* this bold expression, he would have seen to apply his *metaphor* more properly.

VIII. Where the word or phrase is *foreign*, there is, if possible, still less doubt.

——— at last his sail-broad *vans*
He spreads for flight.
Milton, P. L. ii. v. 927.

Most certainly from Tasso's,

— Spiega al grand volo i *vanni*. ix.

And that of Jonson in his *Sejanus*,

O! what is it proud slime will not believe
Of his own worth, to hear it *equal prais'd*
Thus with the Gods—

A. 1.

from Juvenal's

——— nihil est quod credere de se
Non possit, cum *laudatur Diis æqua* potestas.

IX. Conclude the same when the expression is *antique*, in the writer's own language.

In Mr. Waller's Panegyric on the Protector,

So, when a Lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And angry grows, if he *that first took pain*
To tame his youth, approach the haughty beast,
He bends to him, but frights away the rest.

The antique formality of the phrase *that first took pain*, for, *that first took the pains*, in so pure and modern a speaker, as this poet, looks suspicious. He took it, as he found it in an older writer. There are many other marks of imitation, but we had needed no more than this to make the discovery:

So when a lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And beats his tail, with courage proud, and wroth,

If his commander come, *who first took pain*
To tame his youth, his lofty crest down go'th.
Fairfax's *Tasso*, B. VIII. S. 83.

X. You observe in most of the instances, here given, besides other marks, there is an identity of rhyme. And this circumstance of itself, in our poetry, is no bad argument of imitation, particularly when joined to a similarity of expression. And the reason is, the rhyme itself very naturally brings the expression along with it.

1. "Stuck o'er with titles, and hung round with strings,
That thou may'st be *by Kings, or whores of Kings.*"
Essay on Man, E. IV. v. 205.

from Mr. Cowley in his translation of *Hor.* 1. *ep.* 10.

"To Kings, or to the favourites of Kings."

2. "Such is the world's great harmony, that *springs*
From order, union, full *consent of things.*"
Ep. III. 295.

from Denham's *Cowper's Hill,*

"Wisely she knew the *harmony of things*
As well as that of sounds from discord *springs.*"

3. " Far as the solar walk, or milky way."
Essay on Man, Ep. i. v. 102.

from Mr. Dryden's Pindaric Poem to the memory of K. Charles II.

" Out of the solar walk, or heav'n's high way."

Though these consonancies chyming in the writer's head, he might not always be aware of the imitation.

XI. In the examples, just given, there was no reason to suspect the poet was imitating, till you met with the original. Then indeed the rhyme leads to the discovery. But " if an exact writer falls into a *flatness of expression* for the sake of rhyme, you may ev'n previously conclude that he has some precedent for it."

In the famous lines,

Let modest Foster, if he will, excell
Ten metropolitans *in preaching well.*
Ep. to Satires, v. 131.

I used to suspect that the phrase of *preaching well* so unlike the concise accuracy of Pope, would not have been hazarded by him, if some eminent writer, though perhaps of an older

age and less correct taste than his own, had not set the example. But I had no doubt left when I happened on the following couplet in Mr. Waller.

Your's sounds aloud, and tells us you *excell*
No less in courage, than *in singing well.*
Poem to Sir W. D'Avenant.

Our great poet is more happy in the application of these rhymes on another occasion,

Let such teach others, who themselves *excell*,
And censure freely, who have written *well.*
Essay on Crit. v. 15.

The reason is apparent. But here he glanced at the Duke of Buckingham's,

" Nature's chief master-piece is *writing well.*

XII. " The same pause and turn of expression are pretty sure symptoms of imitation." These minute resemblances do not usually spring from Nature, which, when the sentiment is the same, hath a hundred ways of its own, of giving it to us.

1. That noble verse in the essay on criticism, v. 625.

"For fools rush in, where angels dare not tread,"

is certainly fashion'd upon Shakespear's,

——————— "the world is grown so bad
"That wrens make prey, where angels dare not perch."

Rich. III. A. I. S. III.

2. The verses to Sir W. Trumbal in Past. 1.

"And carrying with you all the world can boast,
To all the world illustriously are lost."

from Waller's *Maid's Tragedy* alter'd,

Happy is he that from the world retires
And carries with him what the world admires.

p. 215. Lond. 1712.

XIII. When to these marks the same *Rhyme* is added, the case is still more evident.

"Men would be angels, angels would be Gods."

Essay on Man, Ep. I. v. 126.

Without all question from Sir Fulk Grevil,

Men would be tyrants, tyrants would be *Gods*.

Works, *Lond.* 1633. p. 73.

XIV. The seeming quaintness and obscurity of an expression frequently indicates imitation. As when in Fletcher's *Pilgrim* we read,

" *Hummings* of higher nature vex his brains."
A. II. S. 2.

Had the idea been original, the poet had expressed it more plainly. In leaving it thus, he pays his reader the compliment to suppose, that he will readily call to mind,

aliena negotia centum
Per caput, et circa saliunt latus;

which sufficiently explains it: As we may see from Mr. Cowley's application of the same passage. " Aliena negotia centum per caput et " centum saliunt latus. A hundred businesses " of other men fly continually about his head " and *ears*, and strike him in the face like " Dorres." *Disc. of Liberty.* And still more clearly, from Mr. Pope's,

" A hundred other men's affairs,
" Like bees, are *humming* in my ears."

Learned writers of quick parts abound in these delicate allusions. It makes a principal part of modern elegancy to glance in this oblique manner at well-known passages in the classics.

XV. I will trouble you with but one more note of *imitated expression*, and it shall be the very reverse of the last. When the passages glanced at are not familiar, the expression is frequently minute and circumstantial, corresponding to the original in the order, turn, and almost number of the words. The reasons are, that, the imitated passage not being known, the imitator may give it, as he finds it, with safety, or at least without offence; and that, besides, the force and beauty of it would escape us in a brief and general allusion. The following are instances:

1. "Man never is, but always to be blest."

Essay on Man, Ep. I. v. 69.

from Manilius,

Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.

2. —"Hope never comes,
"That comes to all."—

Milton, P. L. I. v. 66.

from Euripides in the Troad. v. 676.

— ἀδ', ὃ πᾶσι λείπεται βροτοῖς,
Ξύνεζιν ἐλπὶς.—

3. But above all, that in Jonson's Catiline,

"He shall die:
"*Shall* was too slowly said: He's *dying:* That
"Is still too slow: He's *dead.*"

from Seneca's *Hercules furens*, A. III.

" Lycus Creonti debitas poenas *dabit* :
" Lentum est, dabit ; *dat* : hoc quoque est
lentum ; *dedit*."

You have now, Sir, before you a specimen of those rules, which I have fancied might be fairly applied to the discovery of imitations, both in regard to the SENSE and EXPRESSION of great writers. I would not pretend that the same stress is to be laid on *all*; but there may be something, at least, worth attending to in every one of them. It were easy, perhaps, to enumerate still more, and to illustrate these I have given with more agreeable citations. Yet I have spared you the disgust of considering those vulgar passages, which every body recollects and sets down for acknowledged imitations. And these I have used are taken from the most celebrated of the ancient and modern writers. You may observe indeed that I have chiefly drawn from our own poets; which I did, not merely because I know you despise the pedantry of confining one's self to learned quotations, but because I think we are better able to discern those circumstances, which betray an imitation, in our own language than in any other. Amongst other reasons, an *identity* of words and phrases, upon which so

much depends, especially in the article of *expression*, is only to be had in the *same* language. And you are not to be told with how much more certainty we determine of the degree of evidence, which such identity affords for this purpose, in a language we speak, than in one which we only lisp or spell.

But you will best understand of what importance this affair of *expression* is to the discovery of imitations, by considering how seldom we are able to fix an imitation on Shakespear. The reason is, not, that there are not numberless passages in him very like to others in approved authors, or that he had not read enough to give us a fair hold of him; but that his expression is so totally his own, that he almost always sets us at defiance.

You will ask me, perhaps, now I am on this subject, how it happened that Shakespear's language is every where so much his own as to secure his imitations, if they were such, from discovery; when I pronounce with such assurance of those of our other poets. The answer is given for me in the Preface to Mr. Theobald's Shakespear; though the observation, I think, is too good to come from that critic. It is, that, though his words, agree-

ably to the state of the English tongue at that time, be generally Latin, his phraseology is perfectly English: An advantage, he owed to his slender acquaintance with the Latin idiom. Whereas the other writers of his age, and such others of an older date as were likely to fall into his hands, had not only the most familiar acquaintance with the Latin idiom, but affected on all occasions to make use of it. Hence it comes to pass, that, though he might draw sometimes from the Latin (Ben Jonson, you know, tells us, *He had less Greek)* and the learned English writers, he takes nothing but the *sentiment;* the expression comes of itself, and is purely English.

I might indulge in other reflexions, and detain you still further with examples taken from his works. But we have *lain*, as the Poet speaks, *on these primrose beds,* too long. It is time that you now rise to your own nobler *inventions;* and that I return myself to those, less pleasing, perhaps, but more useful studies from which your friendly sollicitations have called me. Such as these amusements are, however, I cannot repent me of them, since they have been innocent at least, and even ingenuous; and, what I am fondest to recollect, have helped to enliven those many years of

friendship we have passed together in this place. I see indeed, with regret, the approach of that time, which threatens to take me both from *it*, and *you*. But, however fortune may dispose of me, she cannot throw me to a distance, to which your affection and good wishes, at least, will not follow me.

And for the rest,

"Be no unpleasing melancholy mine."

The coming years of my life will not, I foresee, in many respects, be what the past have been to me. But, till they take me from myself, I must always bear about me the agreeable remembrance of our friendship.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate

Friend and Servant.

CAMBRIDGE,
Aug. 15, 1757

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